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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a study of the effects of Washington State's Professional Growth Option (PGO), a state regulation that requires schools districts to plan and implement programs for teacher professional development. Section 1 describes the study which was conducted by teachers who interviewed 23 teachers representing different school systems. Each was interviewed three times over the course of the 1992-93 school year. Four of the districts represented had participated in state-funded pilot projects and had experimented with PGO's for 6 years. The other districts were in their first, second, or third year of the new system. The study also included interviews with the teacher's supervising principals. Section 2 profiles the 23 teachers, their attributes, their school districts, new teacher evaluation policies adopted by their districts, their professional growth goals under the new PGO, the resources available to them, challenges encountered while working on their goals, and their perceptions of the impact of the new system on students and themselves. Section 3 offers case studies of five educators which convey the richness of the professional growth experience. Section 4 presents data on how the principals perceive the PGO. Section 5 offers recommendations for growth. (JB)

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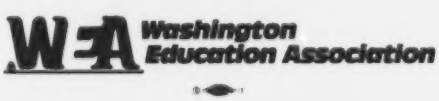


Table of Contents

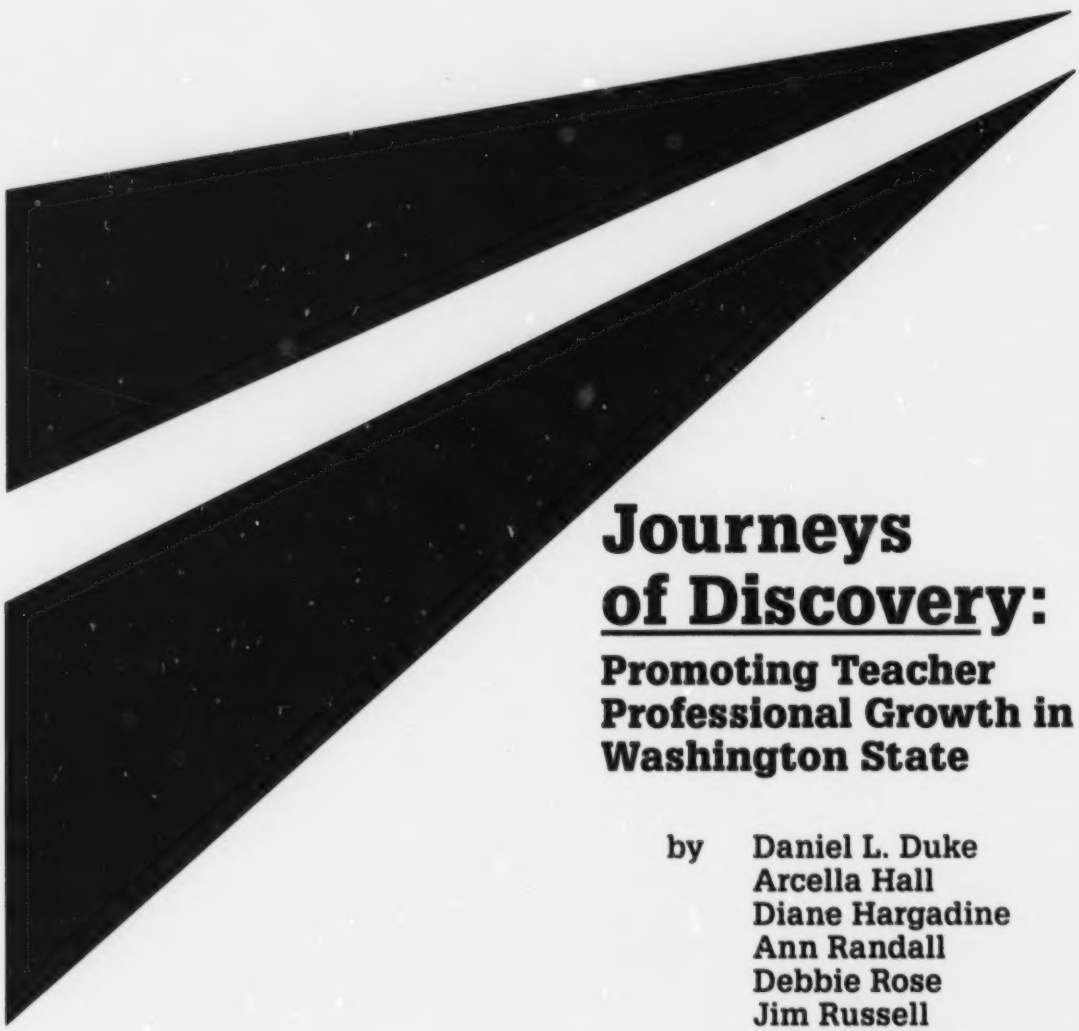
1 **The Dawn of Discovery**
Peruse the study's background and design. **Page 1**

2 **The Professional Growth Experience**
Examine descriptive data on 23 experienced teachers. This section profiles their attributes, their school districts, new teacher evaluation policies adopted by their districts, their professional growth goals under the new PGO, the resources available to them, challenges encountered while working on their goals, and their perceptions of the impact of the new system on students and themselves. **Page 11**

3 **Tales of Five Teachers**
Zero in on case studies of five educators who convey the richness of the professional growth experience. Enjoy details typically lost in summaries of descriptive data. **Page 43**

4 **Principals' Perceptions**
How do supervising principals perceive the new PGO? **Page 75**

5 **Recommendations for Growth**
Explore implications of our findings and recommendations for those committed to improving professional growth for competent teachers. **Page 85**



Journeys of Discovery:

Promoting Teacher Professional Growth in Washington State

by Daniel L. Duke
Arcella Hall
Diane Hargadine
Ann Randall
Debbie Rose
Jim Russell
Pat Steinburg
Dave Struthers
and
Jessie Yoshida

1

The Dawn of Discovery

Thomas Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the Pacific Coast regions in 1804. Their two-year journey of discovery changed forever the course of events on the Western frontier and produced invaluable information about its flora, fauna, and native peoples. Nearly two centuries later, the Northwest again is the scene of exploration, but the explorers today are experienced public school teachers, and their journeys of discovery are the search for meaningful professional growth.

Educators and policy makers in other states will benefit from the Washington experience as they travel the road to improved teaching and learning.

The Washington Experience: Twenty-three Educators and Their Quest for Excellence

Twenty-three teachers from the State of Washington helped blaze a trail opened by state policy makers who sought to improve teacher evaluation. Research and professional judgment convinced these lawmakers that existing evaluation practices did little to promote professional growth for the vast majority of teachers. They capitalized on 1985 legislation that shifted the focus of much administrative supervision and evaluation from narrow accountability to ongoing professional growth.

The result? Washington's new Professional Growth Option (PGO). Educators and policy makers in other states will benefit from the Washington experience as they travel the road to improved teaching and learning.

Background to New Legislation

Washington State policy makers, caught up in the ferment surrounding the 1983 publication of ***A Nation at Risk***, pondered the need for change. Among the areas of school operations they targeted for reform was teacher evaluation. House Bill 849, which became law in 1985, was a result of their labors. The bill created a "short form" for the evaluation of teachers during two out of every three years. Teachers with four years of "satisfactory" evaluations qualified for the "short form," a scaled down version of the regular observation and evaluation process. The intent of the legislature was to free competent teachers to spend more time on professional growth and enable administrators to focus more of their energies on teachers in need of special assistance. HB 849 also required that all school administrators receive training in evaluation and directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify and pilot test promising new teacher evaluation systems.

The intent of the legislature was to free competent teachers to spend more time on professional growth and enable administrators to focus more of their energies on teachers in need of special assistance.

Multi-track Evaluation Conceived

School districts in Washington were invited to submit proposals involving alternative approaches to teacher evaluation. Three pilot proposals which eventually received funding called for a *multi-track evaluation system*:

- Once every three years tenured teachers with a record of satisfactory evaluations received the option of developing a long-term professional growth plan.
- District resources assisted teachers in accomplishing the goals specified in PGO plans.
- After two years of work on a plan, teachers cycled back onto the regular teacher evaluation track, where they were observed by an administrator and evaluated using the "long form."

In the fall of 1990, input from participants in the HB 849 pilot projects and major stakeholders such as the ***Washington Education Association***, convinced the ***State Board of Education*** to approve a new regulation for the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). WAC 392.192 dealt exclusively with the professional development of teachers. Among its provisions were requirements that every school district establish a professional growth committee comprised of representatives of certificated employees and administrators; this committee was to develop a "professional growth program." The regulations also specified that, unless otherwise bargained, every school district must adopt a professional growth program by the 1992-1993 school year.

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The ***Washington Education Association*** conducted a survey of local association presidents in the winter and spring of 1993, producing the following report card:

- Sixty-nine school districts (33.2%) out of 208 reported having adopted a new teacher evaluation system, including a Professional Growth Option (PGO).
- Fifty-four districts (26%) reported being in the process of developing such a system.
- Twenty-two other districts (10.6%) were set to implement a new teacher evaluation system with a PGO by the end of the 1992-93 school year.
- Interestingly, almost sixty-three districts, or one-third of the total reporting, had taken no steps to comply with WAC 392.192.

Design of the Study

Journeys of Discovery authors listened to what teachers had to say about their own professional development, specifically any growth inspired by the new PGO. Of particular interest were the views of teachers considered by colleagues to have had positive experiences with the PGO.

The success or failure of a new system like the PGO ultimately boils down to the experiences of individual teachers with unique needs and experiences working in different settings.

Their hope was to learn enough from these exemplars to draw some tentative conclusions about the Professional Growth Option. What were highly-motivated participants capable of accomplishing? What lessons could be learned from these teachers to help "fine-tune" fledgling PGO's? What information could be passed along to school districts that had not yet completed their teacher evaluation plans?

In studying change in schools, Gene Hall and Shirley Hord *(1987)* underscored the importance of three assumptions:

- First, ***the basic unit of change is the individual***. Consequently, the success or failure of a new system like the PGO ultimately boils down to the experiences of individual teachers with unique needs and experiences working in different settings.
- Second, ***change is a process, not an event***. In other words, change occurs over time. In order to understand professional growth, it therefore becomes necessary to follow teachers for some period of time rather than collecting data at one point in time.
- Third, ***change cannot be understood without understanding the point of view of participants***. The observations of coworkers and supervisors may yield interesting information, but only the "voices" of those participating directly in professional development activities can provide insight into what it means to try to grow professionally.

These assumptions helped guide the study. They signified, for example, that one-shot surveys or brief interviews of teachers' PGO experiences should not guide our study. To understand *bona fide* participation in the Professional Growth Option, the study team consulted actual teachers — and on more than one occasion. Twenty-three teachers representing several different school systems were identified, then interviewed individually on three occasions over the course of a school year: August of 1992, just prior to the beginning of school; late November of 1992; and May of 1993. In addition, interviews with each teacher's supervising principal were scheduled for May 1993.

Nine selected school systems provided opportunities for comparison across like and unlike districts. Four districts had participated in state-funded pilot projects, and, therefore, had experimented with PGO's for six years. The other five districts were in their first, second, or third year of the new teacher evaluation system. One of the districts was urban, five suburban, and three rural. A lack of more urban districts reflected the fact these systems were slow to implement a PGO. ***Additional descriptive information regarding the nine school systems can be found in Chapter 2.***

To conduct comparisons of teachers' PGO experiences within as well as across school systems, this study's authors asked for three teacher nominees from each of the nine districts. Superintendents and local teacher association presidents identified teacher PGO participants who were perceived as having a positive experience. Twenty-seven teachers initially joined the study, but four subsequently requested to be dropped for various reasons. ***A profile of the 23 remaining participants appears at the beginning of Chapter 2.***

Change is a process, not an event.

The Authors of Discovery

One of the unique features of this study is the fact it was conducted largely through the efforts of practitioners. Work on the study, in fact, constituted a robust form of professional growth for all involved.

The Team of Nine

Ann Randall, a staff member with the Olympic UniServ Council in Poulsbo, Washington, organized the team. She invited researcher ***Dan Duke*** of the University of Virginia, to assist with the design of the study, data collection and analysis, and writing up the results. Duke's work on new models of teacher evaluation and professional growth had proved influential in several of the original pilot districts and in the drafting of guidelines for the Washington Administrative Code. Randall also asked two of her ***Washington***

Education Association (WEA) colleagues, ***Jim Russell*** and ***Pat Steinburg***, to participate. Russell, besides his work with the ***WEA*** and ***National Education Association (NEA)***, played a key role on the state committee that recommended revisions in teacher evaluation law. Steinburg and Randall served as local association leaders in South Kitsap, a district that had participated as a state pilot project. The remaining five members of the study team included four teachers — ***Diane Hargadine, Debbie Rose, Dave Struthers,*** and ***Jessie Yoshida*** — and a school principal, ***Arcella Hall***. These individuals had played active roles in developing PGO's in their own school districts and in providing PGO training around the state.

The prevailing view of educators was that fear of incompetence drove traditional teacher evaluation, despite the fact that the vast majority of teachers were considered to be competent. What these teachers needed were opportunities to grow beyond competence — to move to higher levels of understanding and performance.

The study team met periodically during the 1992-1993 school year to design interview schedules and review data. The study's emergent design allowed one set of interview responses to give birth to subsequent interview questions. To increase the trustworthiness of the data, transcripts of interviews were shared with respondents. When necessary, corrections were made. Respondents also verified the accuracy of the five case studies in Chapter 3. To provide additional verification and insight, interviews were conducted with the respondents' principals.

The Importance of the Study

Washington's Pioneering Spirit

Washington ranks as one of the first states in the United States to revise legislation regarding teacher evaluation in order to promote greater professional growth for experienced teachers. Traditional teacher evaluation practices had not contributed greatly to instructional improvement, and many observers considered these practices to be a waste of teachers' and administrators' time *(Duke 1990; Stiggins and Duke 1988)*. The prevailing view of educators was that fear of incompetence drove traditional teacher evaluation, despite the fact that the vast majority of teachers were considered to be competent. What these teachers needed were opportunities to grow beyond competence — to move to

higher levels of understanding and performance. New models of teacher evaluation, like Washington's, were needed if teachers were to receive assistance in ongoing professional development.

Why is professional development of paramount importance?

- Opportunities for growth are associated with job satisfaction.
- Professional development may enhance feelings of efficiency and prevent boredom.
- As school officials grow more concerned about retaining talented teachers, professional development may provide a mechanism for ensuring "the best and the brightest" teachers stay in education.
- Professional development represents a key element in school reform: teachers, no matter how talented, cannot rely exclusively on the knowledge they acquired early in their careers. New research and policies, curriculum changes, and the changing nature of today's students and their families dictate that teachers continue to learn and refine their skills.

Teachers, no matter how talented, cannot rely exclusively on the knowledge they acquired early in their careers. New research and policies, curriculum changes, and the changing nature of today's students and their families dictate that teachers continue to learn and refine their skills.

So crucial to school reform has professional development become, in fact, that the National Governors' Association sponsored a conference in the spring of 1994 to determine how to make it a "permanent part of school culture" *(Education Week, May 18, 1994, 8).*

Potential for Vast Reform

New policies being implemented in Washington to promote professional development deserve to be studied. By listening to what teachers have to say about how PGO's function and what they mean for their own growth and that of their students, we hope to learn several things. First, do highly motivated teachers take advantage of the new PGO in similar ways? What goals do they select? What resources

do they utilize to achieve these goals? What role is played by their evaluators?

And, what do these teachers perceive to be the consequences of participating in a PGO? To what extent do they believe they have changed as teachers? Can they provide specific examples of changed attitudes and practices? Do they feel their students have benefited? If so, how? Ultimately, the fate of professional development policies will hinge on the answers to questions such as these.

Finally, our educators described special challenges and obstacles associated with the Professional Growth Option. PGO's are still in their formative stages in most school systems; therefore, such information will help in the process of policy refinement. In many cases, our teachers were among the very first in their districts to take advantage of the new systems. As pathbreakers, these individuals, and their journeys of professional growth, can inspire all committed to the continuous improvement of professional practice.

Acknowledgments

The process of professional development frequently requires extensive cooperation. Producing this study proved no different. We acknowledge the contributions of our 23 teachers, who graciously gave of their time and wisdom so that we might learn. Members of the study team reported being inspired by these teachers' stories. Several said their pride in being educators was renewed as a result of meeting such extraordinary individuals. While we have no way of knowing the extent to which the 23 teachers were exceptional, we are convinced our profession desperately needs such people if it is to confront the challenges presented by today's students.

Several others performed key roles in producing this book. Without the moral and substantive support of ***Jim Seibert*** and ***Donna Dunning*** of the ***WEA***, this project quite simply would never have begun. ***Shari Francis, Glen Cutlip,*** and

Linda Boitano of the ***NEA*** provided resources, important insight, and assistance. ***Suze Marie Kroeker*** lent uniformity to the manuscript by editing the writing of the nine authors. ***Karen K. Reed*** provided the artistic expertise by designing the cover and format of the text, selection of paper and ink colors, and coordinated the printing process. ***JoAn Lucy*** served as the administrative assistant for the project, coordinating research meetings, transcript production and distribution, and the preparation of the manuscript. She also provided advice on the interview questions, managed the project's budget and kept everyone organized. To say her contributions were invaluable would be to risk understatement.

2

The Professional Growth Experience

Chapter Two tackles various aspects of teachers' experiences with the PGO:

- **Teacher Profiles** — *The chapter opens with a profile of the 23 teachers in the study.*
- **School Districts** — *Subsequent sections detail participating school districts and professional growth policies, PGO goals, and resources available to facilitate work on the goals.*
- **Perceptions and Obstacles** — *The last two sections cover teachers' perceptions of the obstacles they hurdled while working on the PGO. Finally, how did the results of their efforts pay off by the spring of 1993?*

Experienced Educators

Our 23 experienced educators averaged nearly 45 years of age (x=44.7; median=45) and 16 years of teaching experience (x=16.2; median 16). A relatively stable group, the teachers averaged over eight years (x=8.5; median 7) at their current school and over seven years (x=7.6; median=6) in their current teaching assignment. Teachers covered the range of grade levels and assignments, including ***nine elementary teachers, three teaching specialists, two middle school teachers, five high school teachers,*** **and** ***four media specialists***. The secondary teachers taught English, social studies, science and mathematics.

Length of involvement in the PGO varied. Four teachers were in the first year of a two-year professional growth plan, with 14 in their second year. Five had completed their two-year plan and returned for a year to the standard teacher

evaluation process or "long form." It should be noted, though, that all five of these teachers indicated that they were continuing to work on their professional growth plan during their "long form year." One teacher was participating in her second professional growth plan, having been in the new system for six years.

Administrators apparently moved more frequently than teachers. Our teachers averaged less than three years ($\bar{x}$=2.9; median 3) with their current evaluator, typically a principal.

Nine Districts Profiled

Our teachers represented nine school districts ranging in size from average to small:

- Northshore, in suburban Seattle, was the largest with 18,257 students and 28 schools.
- The smallest district was Camas, on the north side of the Columbia River about thirty minutes from Portland, Oregon, with an enrollment of 2,464 students.
- Only one district, Bellevue, could be considered urban. The rest were suburban or rural.
- Eight of the nine districts were located west of the Cascades.
- Only three districts — Port Angeles, Camas, and Wenatchee — required more than a two-hour drive from Seattle.

Table 1

School District Profile

Table 1 lists the districts, their type, and enrollment as of 1993.

District	District Type	Enrollment
Bellevue	Urban	14,700
Camas	Rural	2,464
Central Kitsap	Suburban	11,689
Issaquah	Suburban	9,200
Northshore	Suburban	18,257
North Thurston	Suburban	12,843
Port Angeles	Rural	5,161
South Kitsap	Suburban	10,387
Wenatchee	Rural	5,700

Four of the districts — Camas, North Thurston, South Kitsap, and Wenatchee — participated in the original pilot program which launched Washington's initiative to reform teacher evaluation in 1986. The other districts subsequently developed PGO's to meet the requirement of WAC 392.192. As of June, 1993 approximately one-third of the school districts in Washington had implemented a PGO, according to a survey conducted by the ***Washington Education Association*** (1992-1993) as part of this study.

Professional Growth Policies

WAC 392 192 required each school district's Professional Growth Option be developed by a joint committee. The makeup of each joint committee, as specified in the code, included representation across K-12 levels from both the administrative and teaching ranks. Each participating group wrestled with issues that surfaced during committee meetings.

Key issues facing committees were identified by analyzing language in the 1992-93 collective bargaining agreements from the nine districts in the study:

- Should participation in a PGO be voluntary or mandatory?
- Should a specific type of goal or number of goals be required?
- Should building administrators control — or have veto power — over teachers' goals?
- Should regularly scheduled conferences between teachers and their supervisors be required?
- Should data generated during the PGO cycle be used in teachers' evaluations?
- What should be the number, type, and length of supervisory observations for teachers during the PGO cycle?
- How should a teacher on the PGO who experiences teaching difficulty be treated?
- Should training in goal setting be required?

Teacher participation in the PGO was voluntary in eight of the nine districts involved in the study. The ninth district developed provisions requiring participation in the PGO by all tenured teachers. State law required teachers to demonstrate four years of satisfactory performance based on state and local performance standards in order to take advantage

State law required teachers to demonstrate four years of satisfactory performance based on state and local performance standards in order to take advantage of the "short form" evaluation process and participate in a PGO. This provision effectively barred beginning teachers and teachers not meeting minimum standards from entering a PGO.

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Contract Language and the PGO

While state guidelines designated sources of information and assessment data to be utilized by teachers in goal development, the specific types and number of goals were not addressed. Eight of the nine districts in the study left goal selection to the professional discretion of the individual teacher. Three of these eight, however, provided lists of sample goals and/or categories of goals to be used by teachers as references during the goal development process. One district stipulated that teachers were free to choose their own goals, but that the choice must be consistent with district and building goals. Each teacher in this district was required to select goals — depending on their complexity — from the categories of teacher, student, program, and personal goals, with at least one being a teacher goal.

The importance of a "risk free" growth environment for teachers participating in the PGO was addressed in the Washington Administrative Code 392.192.

Provisions for monitoring teacher progress throughout the two-year course of a PGO were provided in eight of the nine districts. Five districts specified dates by which meetings to assess progress must take place between teachers and building supervisors. Three districts required three meetings per year, but specified no dates. The ninth district made a vague reference to meetings as designated by the state "short form" evaluation procedure.

How should principals deal with teacher goals judged to be inappropriate? District guidelines varied. While none of the nine provided for outright veto power, four contracts contained the following language which allowed supervisory intervention if needed:

- The administrator shall provide a framework.
- Goals will be developed, maintained, and executed cooperatively.

- The principal shall act to coordinate efforts toward *common goals.*

The Risk Free Factor

The importance of a "risk free" growth environment for teachers participating in the PGO was addressed in the *Washington Administrative Code 392.192. (1990).* It stipulated the following:

> *Materials/records/portfolios expressly developed as a result of the individual's participation in the professional growth program shall be the property of the certified staff member participating in the program and shall not be retained in the employee's personnel file or used by the district in its formal evaluation criteria.*

In addition, the "short form" evaluation procedure with which the PGO programs in the nine-district study were coupled was subject to limitations, as stated in the *Revised Code of Washington (1985).*

> *The short form evaluation process may not be used as a basis for determining that an employee's work is unsatisfactory ... nor as probable cause for the nonrenewal of an employee's contract under RCW 28A.405.210.*

All nine districts also supported the idea that failure to achieve PGO goals should not result in any negative consequences for teachers. This provision formed the basis for what is referred to in some contract language as a "data curtain" and minimized the risk of teachers being adversely affected if they failed to achieve their professional growth goals. Recall the intention of the policy: only teachers judged to be competent will be permitted to participate in a PGO. Consequently, districts had little to lose by encouraging qualified teachers to take risks by selecting ambitious goals.

All nine districts supported the idea that failure to achieve PGO goals should not result in any negative consequences for teachers.

In Quest of High Standards

The maintenance of teaching standards during teachers' involvement in the PGO was addressed in district contracts and in state statute:

- First, four years of satisfactory teaching evaluations were required to participate in a PGO.
- Second, after two years on a PGO, the original statute specified teachers must return to a summative evaluation process for a one-year period.[1] During this year, basic performance standards were evaluated using contractually agreed upon procedures. Washington's 1994 legislative session amended the statute to allow the PGO cycle to be extended for longer periods of time, as long as the extension was mutually bargained.

> [1] ***Summative evaluation refers to teacher evaluation for the purpose of accountability. Failure to achieve satisfactory ratings on summative evaluation can lead to focused assistance and eventual job loss. Formative evaluation — the focus of the PGO — is intended, on the other hand, to promote ongoing professional growth.***

- The third method of insuring teaching standards — based on the "short form" law — stipulated an annual minimum of sixty non-continuous minutes of observation time by an administrator, without a written summary, or thirty minutes of continuous observation with a written summary. All nine districts in the study required an annual statement signed by the principal which certified that teachers met or exceeded the minimum state performance standards. Each district retained this statement of competence in every teacher's personnel file.

[During the 1994 legislative session, this statute was amended, allowing districts to mutually bargain the elimination of the "short form" during the PGO cycle.]

The "Safety Valve" Provision

Teachers unable to correct deficiencies within the summative evaluation year continued in the summative track until the needed improvements were made, or they were transferred to a special assistance track.

What if teachers experienced difficulty during their PGO year? All nine districts provided a "safety valve": removal from the PGO for teachers unable to maintain performance standards.

- Five districts presented a written notice of concern to a teacher before proceeding with a formal removal process.
- Two districts required the use of an outside evaluator to confirm the existence of problems serious enough to warrant removal from a PGO.
- The remaining two districts called for increased observation, monitoring and various programs to remediate a teacher's problems prior to removal from a PGO.

In all nine districts, contracts dictated that teachers removed from the PGO must be returned to the summative evaluation process. If their problems were corrected, they returned to the PGO. Teachers unable to correct deficiencies within the summative evaluation year continued in the summative track until the needed improvements were made, or they were transferred to a *special assistance track*. All nine districts provided that teachers unable to correct problems be placed on probation as provided in state and contract law.

Staff Training

The issue of staff training also was addressed by district policies. Three of the nine districts required teachers to participate in training covering different aspects of the PGO. A fourth district provided training but did not require teacher attendance. The five remaining districts made resources available to teachers interested in training, but did not specify the classes or programs to be taken.

PGO Goals

Goals selected by our 23 teachers as part of their Professional Growth Option covered a wide range of subjects and skill areas. In 18 of 19 cases where teachers had spent more than one year in a PGO, their goals evolved and expanded. This section describes the kinds of goals, their range and scope, and factors that appeared to influence their selection.

Educators in the study categorized their professional growth goals using a four-part classification scheme developed by Dan Duke *(See Tables 2 and 3)*:

- ***Prerequisite Goals*** — Preliminary goals that must be accomplished prior to working on professional development goal(s);
- ***Acquisition Goals —*** Goals that involve learning new skills or new knowledge;
- ***Developmental Goals —*** Goals which improve or refine existing skills, knowledge, attitudes or attributes;
- ***Application Goals —*** Goals which apply existing skills or knowledge to a familiar or new situation; or apply new skills or knowledge to a familiar or new situation.

Table 2

Duke's Typology of Professional Development Goals

Daniel L. Duke ◆ University of Virginia

Goal	Type	Example
1.0	**Prerequisite Goal**	*Accomplish activities necessary to work on professional development goal, such as awareness-building, fund-raising, time management.*
2.0	**Acquisition Goal**	
	2.1 Acquire new skill;	*Learn to speak Spanish;*
	2.2 Acquire new knowledge.	*Learn the work of a new author.*
3.0	**Developmental Goal**	
	3.1 Develop/refine existing skill;	*Become a better public speaker;*
	3.2 Develop/refine existing knowledge;	*Update knowledge of post-Soviet Russia;*
	3.3 Develop/refine attitudes or attributes.	*Increase sensitivity to the needs of special education students.*
4.0	**Application goal**	
	4.1 Apply existing skill or knowledge to familiar situation;	*Use existing knowledge of drama to enhance language arts course;*
	4.2 Apply new skill or knowledge to familiar situation;	*Use recently acquired knowledge of computers to enhance geometry class;*
	4.3 Apply existing skill or knowledge to new situation;	*Use existing knowledge of drama to motivate students in a new dropout prevention program;*
	4.4 Apply new skill or knowledge to new situation.	*Use recently acquired knowledge of computers to challenge students in a new thinking skills program.*

Which type of professional development goal would be most challenging for you?

Application Goals: Teachers and Practicality

Traditionally, K-12 teachers prefer gaining knowledge of immediate use in their classrooms; so it was not surprising that 15 of 23 participants chose ***application goals***. These goals included integrating physical education and social studies, incorporating keyboarding and word processing in a fourth grade classroom, integrating language arts and social studies in order to supplement a textbook, and increasing self-esteem through more positive and fewer negative statements in the classroom. One teacher who moved from the classroom into a new position as Library Media Specialist (LMS) selected goals of automating the library so staff and students could more readily access materials, and installing a database for easier check in and out. Achieving these goals entailed taking LMS certification courses and applying new skills and knowledge to a new situation.

Traditionally, K-12 teachers prefer gaining knowledge of immediate use in their classroom.

Developmental Goals: The Building Blocks

The next most frequently cited PGO goals were ***developmental goals***. One fourth grade teacher incorporated new math standards into her program, requiring her to update her knowledge base. She and a teacher partner enrolled in a course called ***Math in the Mind's Eye*** and modeled lessons for each other. This duo took turns: one week the participant taught, while her partner observed commenting on areas for improvement; then, they switched roles the following week. The two teachers also planned to share their new standards and practices with parents at "Family Math Nights."

Other developmental goals involved a third grade teacher who wanted to catch up with the rest of her team in the area of thinking skills, and a first grade teacher whose desire to increase student composition writing led her to the writing architectures of educational consultant Jim Sabol's ***Write Right***.

Acquisition Goals: Procuring Knowledge

Five teachers identified ***acquisition of knowledge goals***. For example, one fourth grade teacher desired knowledge of authentic assessment in reading and composition, while another fourth grade educator wished to learn about exemplary schools by reading and discussing William Glasser's book, ***The Quality School***, with a study group.

An area of controversy in PGO systems may be personal goals.

Prerequisite Goals: Getting Ready to Grow

Prerequisite goals encompass tasks learners must achieve prior to working on a professional development goal. Such goals include awareness-building, fund-raising, and time management activities.

A prerequisite goal described by a Language Arts Specialist for Enrichment and Remediation (LASER) — who served as both department head and building inservice chair for her elementary school — was to facilitate staff members' growth in both technology and multicultural education.

This educator updated staff on workshops, conferences, classes and materials, located resources, and scheduled observations so that the informed staff ultimately would define its philosophy and incorporate new knowledge and skills into the classroom. Ultimately, this educator boosted vision. She and her staff gained awareness. Effectively incorporating both technology and multicultural education into this school no longer loomed as impossibilities.

Goal Selection and School Goals

Educators sometimes select professional growth goals linked to district and building initiatives: sixteen of twenty-three teachers generated goals related in some way to a district or building goal. Only seven participants indicated their goals grew exclusively out of individual needs and interests.

Involvement on a team appeared as another factor influencing teachers' goal choices, as in the case of the teacher who set a goal to catch up with her team members on thinking skills, particularly concept attainment. While factors such as team membership and school goals sometimes guided the selection of PGO goals, none of the participants said they felt compelled to choose particular goals.

The Personal Goal Dilemma

An area of controversy in PGO systems may involve personal goals. Administrators sometimes claim that school resources should be used only to support work on goals directly related to teaching and learning. But what about the participant who set a goal to lose 25 pounds and spent part of her PGO funds on a weight loss program? No restrictions were placed on the kinds of goals teachers in this district could generate. In addition, her principal adhered to the philosophy that goals which compelled staff members to get their personal lives in order ultimately contributed to a more effective professional performance. As it turned out, this weight-conscious teacher also worked on developing math competency, enrolling in a calculus course, and founding a school math club. And she lost 25 pounds, noting that she subsequently possessed more energy for weekend math club activities and for chairing her building's site-based management committee. In this case, the freedom to choose a personal goal appeared to have enhanced the teacher's professional performance.

The Case of the Evolving Goal

Finally, in 18 of 19 cases teachers who had experienced a Professional Growth Option for more than one year noted that their goals evolved and expanded. For example, one language arts specialist began with the goal of assisting four first grade teachers to develop more of a process approach to reading and writing. She wanted to move away from basal readers and fill-in workbooks and encourage students to compose responses to literature in their own

In 18 of 19 cases teachers who had experienced a Professional Growth Option for more than one year witnessed their goals evolve and expand.

words. This goal required her to apply existing knowledge and skills to a new situation.

When empowered to select professionally and personally meaningful goals, our teachers demonstrated a wide range of needs and interests, a strong commitment to improving classroom effectiveness, and a keen sense of collegiality and teamwork.

In her second year in the PGO, her school selected multicultural education as a focus; she wanted to integrate this curriculum area into her work. "As the fall progressed, I decided the books and writing that I would use with the first graders would be more centered around different authors, with multicultural as the main basis for choosing a piece of literature." Thus, her goal shifted to applying new knowledge to a familiar situation *(See Duke's Typology 4.1)*. Our language arts specialist's goals not only linked directly to building and district initiatives — including those of her first grade team, they also reflected her unique needs, interests, and educational philosophy. For example, one of her PGO goals involved tutoring a prisoner at Monroe State Penitentiary.

When empowered to select professionally and personally meaningful goals, our teachers demonstrated a wide range of needs and interests, a strong commitment to improving classroom effectiveness, and a keen sense of collegiality and teamwork.

Table 3

Sample Professional Growth Goals

Participants categorized their own goals according to Duke's Typology. Examples of PGO goals included the following:

- *Create progress reports to use instead of a report card/standard grades;* ***4.3***
- *Develop a process model/writer's workshop for teaching writing with first grade team;* ***4.3***
- *Deliver existing historical knowledge in a new way via integrated curriculum;* ***4.3***
- *Fully integrate the writing process through* **Write Source** *program; extend program to integrate writing and literacy skills with social studies;* ***4.3***
- *Use hands-on math materials and computer generated drills to increase skills to grade level;* ***4.3***
- *Develop two-hour teaching blocks for psychology and English with another teacher;* ***4.3***
- *Include multicultural authors in first grade reading readiness work;* ***4.2***
- *Work on authentic assessment in reading and composition;* ***4.2, 2.1***
- *Incorporate physical fitness into classroom; integrate P.E. into social studies;* ***4.1***
- *Include more positive and fewer negative statements in the classroom to increase students' self-esteem;* ***4.1***
- *Use cooperative learning;* ***4.1***
- *Work to train staff on building-wide multicultural and technology goals;* ***4.1***
- *Incorporate the computer in teaching as well as integrating the computer with other machines/technology;* ***4.4, 4.3, 4.2, 4.1***
- *Improve student writing skills, such as use of logic, mind-mapping; improve assessment strategies for better writing feedback;* ***4.4, 4.3, 3.3, 3.1***
- *Focus on concept attainment in developing thinking skills within a teaching team;* ***4.2, 3.2***
- *Examine new math standards; incorporate standards into math program;* ***3.2***
- *Work on Glasser's goals for quality schools;* ***2.2***
- *Learn about portfolio assessment;* ***2.2***
- *Learn and use Macintosh grading system;* ***4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0***
- *Develop a plan for the new library; incorporate student decision-making in development of library;* ***4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0***
- *Develop language arts curriculum using literature;* ***4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0***
- *Improve interpersonal relationships with students, parents, colleagues;* ***4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0***
- *Acquire and use more technology in math classes and club; expand use of scientific calculators in math club.* ***4.0, 3.0, 2.0, 1.0.***

Ready Resources

Access to resources plays a vital role in the achievement of growth goals. What resources did our nine school districts provide to the 23 educators? Did teachers also take advantage of "unofficial" sources of support to help them accomplish their PGO goals?

District Assistance

Access to resources plays a vital role in the achievement of growth goals.

Four of the nine school districts provided financial resources for the exclusive use of teachers on the PGO. Each of the four included contractual provisions in their respective collective bargaining agreements, specifying the amount available for teachers and establishing a procedure to access the money. One district provided "funds" for each school to use to support teachers' goals. Another district used a formula for allocating dollars. A third district provided $150 for each PGO participant, with an additional $500 available through local grants. The fourth district allocated $200 per PGO participant during the first year and $250 for the second year with the option to save the first year's amount until the second year for a total of $450.[2] Three districts negotiated provisions in their collective bargaining agreements to pay teachers for additional work performed beyond their work day and work year. Work on a professional growth goal that extended beyond the regularly scheduled day or time spent working an additional day was considered approved work for funding.

[2] ***One of the two teachers from this district believed, however, that the money was only available for the first year and that no resources were provided for the second year due to a budget crisis.***

Teachers and administrators did not always clearly understand their districts' funding policies. One teacher presumed the professional development resources were available for all teachers — whether or not they were involved in

the PGO. Her principal, however, believed the money was to be used exclusively for professional growth. Funds available to this teacher under her contract's provisions ranged from $100 and $200 per teacher per year, depending on placement on the salary schedule.

Teachers and administrators did not always clearly understand their districts' funding policies.

Only one district did not designate funds for the PGO or specify other resources for possible use on PGO goals. This district did, however, provide PGO training during the work day, which required the district to hire substitutes. Staff development and district inservice training funds also were made available for conferences and workshops on a limited basis.

Beyond specific financial resources referenced above, all nine districts budgeted for general inservice and staff development programs. These resources could be used by PGO participants when a class or workshop related to a PGO goal was offered. One district also allowed funds from federal and state grants to be used by a fifth and sixth grade team to accomplish its collaborative PGO goal.

Utilization of Finances

How did PGO participants use available funds available to pursue their professional growth goals? Seven of the nine school districts gave teachers the authority to decide how funds could be spent to accomplish their growth goals. Table 4 shows the teachers' uses of PGO funds. Interestingly, only four of the 23 teachers did not report using any district funds to work on their PGO goals.

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Table 4

Teacher Uses of PGO Resources Available in Nine Districts Studied

District	Coursework/ Tuition	Materials/ Books	Release Time	District Workshops	Conferences
1	■				
2		■	■		
3	■	■		■	■
4			■	■	■
5		■		■	
6	■	■			
7				■	■
8	■		■		
9	■	■	■	■	

Non-financial Support

Collaboration

Twenty-one of our 23 teachers relied on support from colleagues in reaching PGO goals. Fellow teachers were mentioned by 17 individuals, while 12 individuals cited principals as sources of support. Administrative support ranged from encouragement and assistance in clarifying goals to help in writing a grant for computer training and tutoring in thinking skills. Collegial support took various forms, including sharing information and books, assistance in coordinating activities related to PGO goals, and feedback on progress toward goal accomplishment. An elementary teacher reflecting on the value of collaboration captured the feelings of many of the participants:

> *Always view collaboration as the number one thing. That's how I learn best ... from talking with my colleagues and looking at what they're doing and asking them about the things I have an interest in, particularly when I know it's an area of their expertise.*

Several teachers complained their schools and districts were involved in too many initiatives, leaving little time to pursue any particular project, including their PGO goal, in sufficient depth.

Challenges to Professional Growth

Professional growth is rarely easy or free of obstacles. Only one of our 23 teachers reported encountering no difficulties during her PGO experience. The rest mentioned a number of challenges, including those of a self-generated nature and those derived from factors beyond their control. The latter included lack of time, lack of cooperation and encouragement, lack of resources, and the ever-changing context of teaching. Self-generated challenges encompassed inadequate time management, selection of overly ambitious goals, loss of momentum, and personal fears and emotions.

A Question of Time

Lack of time to work on professional growth goals led the list of most frequently mentioned challenges, as cited by 15 of the 23 teachers. Lack of time for pursuing the PGO was

regarded as an organizational issue.[3] Teachers noted the absence of opportunities during the school day to meet and plan with colleagues, observe other teachers using new methods, and conduct goal-related activities. Several teachers complained their schools and districts were involved in too many initiatives, leaving little time to pursue any particular project, including their PGO goal, in sufficient depth. The following comment is illustrative:

> *The first year I taught the new humanities class, many, many times I'd set the alarm, get up at 1:00 a.m., and create what I hoped would be meaningful experiences for the students who would show up that day. Then I'd go to school and teach. Time — it's a major factor. Maybe I've grown old and stubborn, but there's a limit now to what I will do on my own time. I really do believe that districts need to allow a teacher time within the school day to set up, develop, and evaluate a new program.*

[3] ***Participants distinguished between poor time management habits, which they regarded as a self-inflicted problem, and lack of time in the school day for professional development, which was viewed as an organizational problem.***

Eight teachers were bothered by a lack of cooperation or encouragement during the PGO. Lack of enthusiasm for or outright resistance to a PGO-related project from fellow teachers was cited by four individuals. Others mentioned the failure of parents to follow through on an effort to assist struggling students to raise their grades, difficulties obtaining assistance from a paraprofessional, lack of contact with other teachers sharing similar interests, and the benign neglect of the principal.

Inadequate resources plagued five teachers. Two complained that insufficient funds were available to purchase books related to their growth goal. Another teacher indicated she received funds to obtain professional books, but encountered trouble locating works written on concept

attainment, the focus of her goal. The fourth teacher encountered difficulties in achieving her goal of developing a computer lab because she could secure only half the needed number of computers. The last educator exhausted her PGO stipend in April, compelling her to abandon her program at a local weight-loss center.

The Changing Context of Teaching

The final category of "external" challenges involves the ever-changing context of teaching. Nine educators reported their progress on the PGO was adversely affected in some way by unforeseen changes at school. Two teachers, for example, had to adjust to new principals midway through their growth plans. Two more found work on their PGO goals disrupted when team members left and new teachers were hired. Three teachers, including one mentioned previously, indicated that an unexpected change in teaching assignment temporarily delayed their progress. Three cited unusually challenging groups of students who demanded so much attention that they had trouble moving ahead on the PGO.

Time was a self-generated as well as an externally derived problem.

For example, one fourth grade teacher was assigned a class of 29 students, 24 of whom were new to the school. Another teacher faced several difficult students whose need for strict control discouraged her from calling for a substitute when she needed to attend out-of-class functions related to her PGO.

Time was a self-generated as well as an externally derived problem, impeding progress for five teachers who complained their personal time management difficulties created challenges to completing PGO work. They admitted to trying to do too much, losing focus, and sometimes becoming overwhelmed. Rather than blaming others, they saw these problems as the result of their own tendency to over commit.

Overly Ambitious Goals

Related to the problem of over commitment was the selection of *overly ambitious goals*. Four teachers indicated their PGO experiences were adversely affected because they attempted very difficult goals. Interestingly, however, none of the four expressed regret regarding what they eventually accomplished.

- A media specialist attempted to raise her awareness of literature that treated women as positive role models in order to provide a more balanced picture of human achievement for students. Her efforts involved taking a course on Jungian psychology at the University of Washington, investigating the history of ancient goddesses, and reading literature on women from around the world. She eventually tried to "rewrite" several classics, using female instead of male "heroes."

- An elementary social studies teacher's PGO goal originally involved developing an integrated curriculum for her sixth graders; she expanded the goal to include the fifth grade social studies curriculum when her fifth graders complained that they wanted the same types of cross-disciplinary learning the older students were receiving.

- An elementary language arts specialist floundered when she realized multicultural studies was a vast area of inquiry, too extensive to be covered adequately in one PGO project.

- A fourth grade teacher who tried to implement a computer instruction program discovered the demand — by colleagues as well as students — was too great to allow her to instruct everyone interested.

Loss of Momentum

Four teachers reported losing momentum on their PGO. In each case, the problem was reported during the November interview. By the final interview in the spring, however, these teachers felt progress on their goals was again being made. No single cause was associated with the

loss of momentum. A challenging group of students, a husband's accident, personal health problems, and preoccupation with other commitments were cited as contributing factors.

"Any time you're trying something new, you step out, risk, and take a chance of failing."

Psycho-emotional Concerns

The last category of self-generated challenges involved a variety of psycho-emotional concerns. Of the nine teachers in this category, three mentioned fears of taking risks and failing, three noted struggles to achieve some degree of balance between personal and professional life, one commented on her shyness, and two expressed problems dealing with the disappointment of not accomplishing as much as they had hoped. *Several illustrative comments follow.*

A veteran fourth grade teacher reported:

Any time you're trying something new, you step out, risk, and take a chance of failing. And I have failed. For instance, just when you're working with a program, and you think you know how to do it, all of a sudden you sit down and try to apply your skills, and you can't get it to work. And you go to the manual; you read it, and it's just Greek. It makes no sense to you. So you go back to square one again. Start over. And a lot of times I have just put it aside, thinking, I'll just have to go back for more training.

A sixth grade language arts teacher who was determined to increase student interest in writing revealed:

I wrote a demonstration story for the kids — oh, it was fun — it took about ten hours; I realized I needed to have some kind of demonstration story for the kids to look at before the writing workshop. Anyway, as I was reading it, the kids really seemed to enjoy it. I had to overcome my own fear of reading to them a story I wrote. Fear that maybe they would laugh at me or not think it was very good.

While all but one of the 23 teachers identified at least one — and usually several — obstacles on their path to professional growth, all of them believed their PGO experience had been worthwhile and productive. The last section of this chapter examines their perceptions of what was accomplished during the PGO experience.

PGO Payoff

One assumption underlying Washington's new professional growth policy was that most experienced teachers are competent and, therefore, more likely to benefit from opportunities for professional development than from conventional teacher evaluation. To what extent did teachers perceive they grew as a result of participating in a PGO? Did they believe students benefited from their professional development activities?

Our teachers felt that they and their students were helped by the PGO, regardless of whether or not they actually accomplished their goal or goals. Of the 19 teachers who completed at least two years of a PGO by the end of the study, all cited at least one specific benefit resulting from their efforts. In all, 15 of 45 initial goals were reported achieved. Remarkably, of these 15 goals, seven involved learning about and implementing computer-based instruction. One teacher described his efforts as follows:

> *I can assess the progress by the fact that this afternoon there were seven students who sat down in front of the computer, and they were on-line and using an encyclopedia and bulletin boards. So it's a real thing.*

Fifteen teachers stated they were continuing on at least one of their original goals.

Fifteen teachers reported they were continuing to work on at least one of their original goals. Teachers set varying numbers of goals: of the 19 teachers with at least two years in a PGO, seven set one goal, eight set two goals, two set three goals, one set four goals, and one set five goals. As they progressed on their original goals, many teachers modified them and added new goals.

One elementary teacher summed up the feelings of many when she said, "You know, I look at my goals as probably never-ending." Of the 19 teachers who had worked on a PGO for at least two years, only two failed to make what they regarded as satisfactory progress.

"It sounded like there was a lot of trust involved in the new system, and it gave me a certain freedom to branch out and try things that might not fit our other evaluation system."

Benefits for Teachers

Without exception, the veteran teachers in our study approved of the PGO. They found the Professional Growth Option was superior to conventional, accountability-driven teacher evaluation systems — systems they felt contributed little to improved performance. Nothing indicated they preferred the PGO because it entailed less effort or supervision. Many noted, in fact, that they worked much harder on the PGO than they had worked previously on teacher evaluation. They also commented that interactions with supervisors were more constructive under the PGO.

A middle school language arts teacher expressed his feelings about participating in the PGO:

I wanted to explore some new areas like expanded curriculum, and the PGO seemed to be an excellent format in which I could do this without having to produce the perfect lesson. I really liked the freedom and opportunity.

Similar sentiments were shared by a fourth grade teacher with over 30 years of teaching experience:

I've taught so many years, and I wanted to experience a new way being evaluated. It sounded like there was a lot of trust involved in the new system, and it gave me a certain freedom to branch out and try things that might not fit our other evaluation process.

Even teachers who set professional growth goals prior to the PGO indicated a preference for the new system. A 42-year-old elementary teacher said,

I have never felt very comfortable just choosing goals that were not that meaningful. The PGO sounded like I

could really work on something long-term — something meaningful to my own personal and professional growth. And I could design the goal to fit my needs rather than choosing from a list.

Teachers praised various aspects of the PGO. They appreciated, for example, the fact that teachers helped design and implement the new program. To the extent the PGO assumed teachers could be trusted to know how best to grow, our teachers felt more like professionals under the new system. Opportunities to work with colleagues on professional development and to spend extended periods of time tackling ambitious goals were cited as additional benefits.

Our teachers' faith in the PGO was not unfounded. Among the types of professional and personal benefits they cited were changes in attitudes, awareness, understanding, teaching competence, and student learning.

Changes in Attitude, Awareness, Understanding

Thirteen of our 23 teachers mentioned 17 different examples of how participation in the PGO had changed attitudes, awareness, and understanding:

- *Six educators noted heightened awareness of new practices and insights regarding professional and personal capabilities.*
- *One elementary social studies teacher, for example, admitted learning that "her way" was not the only way to teach. Her PGO goal focused on curriculum integration.*
- *Another elementary teacher became more aware of specific reading disabilities while working on a computer-based writing program.*
- *A third elementary educator raised her awareness of multicultural education, its philosophical underpinnings, and the importance of infusing it in all subjects.*

Four teachers noted they changed their attitudes as a result of the PGO experiences:

- *A high school media specialist developed a new sense of empowerment and personal control as a result of improving communications and working conditions in the library.*

- *A sixth grade teacher, on the other hand, reduced her need to be in control as she realized how often it prevented students from assuming responsibility for their own learning. She stated, "This year more than ever, I have changed my style. I've loosened that sort of controlling part of myself and that has dramatically changed the way I teach. The payoff is watching kids take charge of their own learning and get excited about learning."*

Teachers also gained new understanding:

- *An elementary librarian came to appreciate adolescent girls' needs for strong female role models in literature. Prior to her PGO work, she had not realized how few readings for this age-group focused on women.*

- *A fourth grade teacher indicated that his PGO project caused him to become more realistic about what to expect from students with learning disabilities.*

- *An elementary language arts specialist who had regarded the parents of gifted students as intrusive and unreasonable developed a positive regard for them as a result of working on a PGO goal.*

The process of working on a PGO entails a high degree of intentionality: teachers specify growth goals and ways to achieve them. Still, not all of the changes in attitudes, awareness, and understanding reported by our teachers were anticipated. Unexpected learning frequently resulted from working on goals. Any effort to assess the impact of professional growth activities must take into account these unintended, as well as intended, outcomes.

Changes in Teaching Competence

How did our 23 educators change as a result of their PGO experiences? Every one of the 23 teachers chose at least one goal related to improving instruction, curriculum content, or assessment of student performance. Eighteen cited 25 different examples of how their teaching competence had improved. Eight teachers, for example, mastered new instructional methods: the use of ***math manipulatives* (2); *computer-based writing programs* (3); *cooperative learning* (2); *concept attainment strategies* (1); and *experiential/community-based learning* (1).**

The process of working on a PGO entails a high degree of intentionality: Teachers specify growth goals and ways to achieve them.

The sixth grade teacher who acquired skill in experiential/community-based learning described her reformation:

> *I have started using the Foxfire approach quite a lot. It has helped me with the particular group of kids I'm working with this year. An example occurred yesterday when I was reading to the kids a new story. A situation came up where a girl had been kidnapped and then murdered, and we talked about it. She had gone with a stranger, so we started discussing not talking with strangers. The students were really intrigued by that idea. They felt that little children do not have good judgment when it comes to different things that could be used as bribes. I let the conversation continue because it was a unifying thing with the class. They were interested and motivated. Out of the conversation came several plays and a rap song. We're going to take these on the road to the kindergarten and preschool so my students can educate little kids about talking to strangers. The students also called up the sheriff and asked him to come talk to them.*

Five teachers cited successful implementation of integrated curriculum units as evidence of changes in their teaching. Two teachers combined technology and writing, while another utilized exercise equipment in her class to promote student understanding of geography: students planned trips to various destinations, calculated the miles on a large map, and then completed the mileage on the exercise

equipment; ten minutes of exercises equaled one hundred miles. The other two educators focused on multicultural studies and the combination of social studies and crafts, respectively. In the case of the latter, the teacher read a new book entitled ***Invitations*** as part of her elementary school's literature circle. Impressed with suggestions concerning how to undertake curriculum integration, she designed a lesson combining early American history and frontier crafts. Students were expected to study traditional household items, how they were made, and what they revealed about life on the frontier. To launch the lessons, the teacher gave students pieces of unbleached muslin and asked them to go home and find three different dyes from natural sources in the kitchen or garden.

Other teachers offered examples of improvements involving ***the development of new curriculum units* (3), the *utilization of technology for instructional and evaluative purposes* (4), *increased communication with parents* (2), and *conceptions of the role of the teacher* (2).** In the last case, two secondary teachers changed from defining their role as imparters of information to facilitators of learning. This change meant students assumed greater responsibility for determining learning needs and seeking assistance from the teacher.

Enriched Relationships

While none of the 23 teachers specifically set a PGO goal involving the improvement of school relations, eight teachers felt that one of the outcomes of their professional development activities involved better relationships or greater sharing among colleagues. Three cited examples where work on the PGO led to reduced isolation and greater collaboration with other teachers. None of the nine districts prevented teachers from working together on PGO goals. Two of the three teachers, when they discovered colleagues with similar interests, elected to proceed collaboratively.

In three instances, teachers working on PGO goals involving computer-based instruction shared what they learned with

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fellow faculty members. While they initially acquired their expertise working independently, these individuals later demonstrated that peers also can benefit from professional growth activities. An elementary language arts specialist capture this enthusiasm toward sharing knowledge:

> *Some colleagues had not been to a workshop in ten years. In one instance I just decided it was something that would really help this person. Let them see what's out there. So I took a day of my own department leave and took this person to a computer workshop, and it was really beneficial. The teacher was very excited.*

Not only did relations with colleagues improve, but three teachers specifically described stronger, more positive relationships with their principals.

Not only did relations with colleagues improve, but three teachers — including one already mentioned — described stronger, more positive relationships with their principals. A third grade teacher whose goal entailed learning about concept attainment strategies said,

> *I'm much, much more comfortable now than at the beginning [of the PGO]. For one reason, I really feel like I'm learning and growing. I'm not just being observed, but the person who is evaluating me is learning along with me. We're figuring out where to phone, what to read, and how to practice this (skill).*

Improved Student Learning

Teachers and administrators were not the only beneficiaries of the PGO. If the perceptions of our 23 PGO pathfinders are any indication, students made substantial gains as a result of these educators' professional development activities. Twenty teachers cited 42 different examples of improvements in student learning.[4]

> [4] ***Note: In independent interviews conducted at the end of the 1992-93 school year, principals frequently confirmed teachers' perceptions of student benefits resulting from PGO goals.***

Most frequently noted areas of improvement were affective growth and writing skills. Eight teachers cited examples of student benefits in each area. Affective improvements included ***greater self-reliance* (4), *more confidence* (2), *higher self-esteem* (1),** and ***a greater liking for mathematics* (1)**. One teacher, for example, said that students with poor handwriting gained the confidence to pursue writing assignments with enthusiasm as a result of her work on computer-based writing. Another teacher discovered her work with cooperative learning strategies led to greater student involvement in identifying signature themes in music.

In every case where a teacher witnessed student writing improvement, the PGO goal involved learning word processing and computer-based writing programs *or* implementing the writer's workshop approach in class. Teachers believed students had improved their understanding of the technical aspects of writing, spent more time on writing, and wrote more imaginative stories.

Other areas of the curriculum where student benefits were noted included ***mathematics* (4), *computers* (4), *research skills* (3), *social studies* (2), *reading* (1), *and thinking skills* (6).**

Math

Improvements in mathematics involved the use of math manipulatives and calculators.

Research

Research skills were augmented in various ways. In order to help students learn to write mysteries, one teacher invited a local detective to visit his class and guide students in the handling of evidence and clues.

Social Studies

Another teacher used the Foxfire approach to teach students how to gather local oral history.

Thinking

Work on thinking skills involved teaching students how to assess their own learning, differentiate concepts, and integrate knowledge across different subject matter areas.

Additional benefits of the PGO cited by our educators included ***greater assistance for students with special problems* (2), *improved grades* (1), and *greater use of the library* (1).**

Summary statements and numerical representations fail to capture the richness of our teachers' experiences or the complex ways in which work on one goal led to unanticipated developments, new goals, and unforeseen improvements. ***To augment and enliven the preceding descriptive account, we have showcased five teachers in Chapter 3.*** These individuals represent different grade levels, school districts, and types of PGO goals. ***All names of individuals in the case studies are fictitious.*** We hope the following five accounts convey a greater understanding of the teachers who participated in this PGO project — who committed to self-improvement and bettering the welfare of their students.

3

The Uniqueness of Professional Growth

Tales of Five Teachers

A Journey to the Nile

Ken Fukumoto: The Case of the Inventive Instructor

During Ken Fukumoto's second interview, his researcher realized that a metamorphosis had occurred in this erstwhile reserved, 48-year-old veteran educator. A self-described traditional middle school teacher, Ken recounted the enormous risk he had taken as part of his PGO experience:

A metamorphosis had occurred in this reserved, 48-year-old veteran educator.

> *The class was all expecting a guest author. When that didn't work out, I dressed up ... as a mummy. Prior to my mummified entrance, I sent some coded messages to my class telling them where I was in my journeys — a Western Union kind of thing. It took me twenty minutes to tape my body. I had written a song. I read it, and then had the kids go over the chorus. It goes like this. "Pharaoh, Pharaoh, what you gonna' do when they come for you?" Then I had them perform [the song] with me, and we also played Steve Martin's* ***King Tut.*** *I really had fun creating this as something that would serve as a model for a social studies unit on Egypt, as well as a kickoff our mystery writing workshop.*

Why had Ken put himself in this tenuous position? "I had to learn what it felt like to be a student again," he ex-

plained as he discussed trust, and the notion that teachers ask students to become vulnerable by letting teachers judge their performance. "But we never put ourselves in their place," he added. By his actions, he demonstrated that his classroom was a place where creativity and risk-taking would be supported.

Prior to participating in the PGO, Ken's annual summative evaluation, based on his supervisor's observations, measured his competence against specific performance standards. While he did not feel at risk of being evaluated negatively, he did feel constricted. The summative system failed to reward exploration or risk-taking. During this standard evaluation Ken regarded himself as the central focus, expected to produce perfect lessons.

By his actions, he demonstrated that his classroom was a place where creativity and risk-taking would be supported.

Taking Risks, Making Mistakes

When an opportunity arose to participate in the PGO, he volunteered because he felt that under the new system he would have an opportunity to take some risks, make mistakes, and move beyond the need to be perfect. As Ken stated, "I wanted to explore some new areas, such as expanding the curriculum. This seemed to be an excellent format in which I could do it without having to have to be perfect. I really like the freedom and opportunity. Without the opportunity to enter the Professional Growth Option I would have been 'traditional' — you know, with the excellent lesson prepared (for the evaluator) compared to exploring new types of curriculum and just doing a variety of new things."

The Point of Departure: Initial Goals

During his first year on the PGO, Ken wanted to improve the writing curriculum in his classroom. For several years he had asked students to use computers to write and publish stories, but he wanted to give more depth to his writing curriculum. He wanted the students to experience better story writing activities and improve their own writing. His

initial goal to improve the writing curriculum included subgoals such as utilizing a computer program for story writing and teaching his students how to use computers for their stories.

An additional goal was to create writing-related activities that energized young writers. His students needed a change of attitude toward writing so they would look forward to the experience and, in fact, yearn to write. Ken believed they would be motivated if they met some real authors. In order to pay authors to visit his class, he applied for and was awarded a district-funded grant. In addition to using the computer for word processing, he wanted to use a computerized program for assessing student writing. He developed pre- and post-tests which examined students' attitudes toward writing and administered these surveys before the activities began and when they were finished. The results of the surveys indicated a dramatic positive shift in student willingness to write. These results inspired Ken to rely upon student input as an integral part of determining what his students needed in order to become more successful writers.

A final goal involved producing a video tape of the presentation made by his guest author. It was his intent to make this tape available through the school library for building-wide use. Ken, however, experienced technical difficulties, which made getting the tape ready for reuse and distribution difficult.

Altering the Route: Revised Goals

In the second year of his Professional Growth Option, Ken added some goals that were fundamentally different from his previous year's. In year one, he focused on the development of curriculum and related activities. The main focus of his goals in year two shifted to increasing his knowledge of and ability to develop a writing curriculum. By year two, he had grown concerned about his students' lack of research skills, their capacity to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and their ability to set writing goals.

Ken discovered through student-interest surveys that his students lacked the ability to do research and to develop clues and characters. An inservice course in mind-mapping and branching piqued Ken's interest, and a new goal was born. Students would create a different system for developing their characters and clues and gathering their research. Prior to using mind-mapping strategies, Ken's students reluctantly researched and developed their characters on 3X5 cards. He decided that the introduction of mind-mapping and the use of branching would bolster student willingness to develop characters and clues in mystery writing. At that time, however, he was uncertain as to how he would measure a successful change in student attitudes. After introducing mind-mapping, he asked his young writers to practice by branching a personal event. He hoped branching and mapping would build a sense of confidence in his students.

In April of the second year, Ken reflected on his evaluation of student writing skills and student attitudes about writing. "[The PGO] opened the realization of the need to evaluate student progress as part of the formative strand. I have been very curious to see the surveys, to see the student responses. I'm beyond the point of worrying what they are going to say. Because I feel, overall, very positive that I am really going to learn how to teach clues, or what I need to do, or what I shouldn't do."

In addition to modifying his goals regarding the writing curriculum, Ken continued to investigate the production of quality video tapes by seeking outside resources and developing his own technical skills.

Support for Change

Ken's journey began with a goal of his choice. He focused on improving the writing curriculum. The PGO in his district required that he develop a system for evaluating his progress toward his goals. Therefore, he sought student input. For the first time in his teaching career, he was asked to assess how the curriculum he had created affected his

students. He risked seeing himself as students saw him. Evaluation no longer meant measurement of observable performance; it meant assessing his ability to excite and motivate students to learn.

Ken's ability to create an environment where learning occurred — rather than relying on his ability to deliver a perfect lesson plan — now took center stage. As he progressed, he switched the focus of his teaching from imparting information to providing a setting which allows students to learn.

Changing the teacher evaluation system enabled Ken to turn the teaching act upside down. He went from being the person responsible for the learning in his classroom to making the students responsible for learning.

The Principal Support Factor

Teachers recognize that students need reinforcement and support in order to grow and learn. But what type of support do teachers need to grow professionally? In Ken's case, he felt very strongly that his supervisor's involvement was critical to his own success. He described her as providing support by creating a safe atmosphere where he could bounce his ideas around. She helped to clarify his thoughts and offered suggestions and resources. He said, "I was very excited to hear her input. She was very positive, very excited, very enthusiastic. She was applauding my ideas as we went along, and I felt encouraged by that." He indicated that his relationship with his supervisor was good prior to the PGO, but it improved through the process. "It's even better, I think, because she respected my risk-taking and the new things I've learned that benefit kids."

Ken's ability to create an environment where learning occurred — rather than relying on his ability to delivery a perfect lesson plan — now took center stage.

Ken's district provided each teacher on professional growth plans with $150 for materials, classes, and supplies. In addition, the district allowed teachers to apply for a $500 grant to support project ideas. These grants were limited in number and competitive in nature. Ken applied for and received a $500 grant, allowing him to hire authors to visit

his class and to buy computer programs for writing and editing stories.

Overcoming Obstacles

Ken believed his only impediment to professional growth was self-inflicted. He was not afraid of his supervisor, with whom he had always enjoyed a good relationship. He was not afraid of his colleagues and their opinions of him. And, he already knew he could earn high marks on any teacher evaluation. He believed the obstacle to improvement came from within: his fear of making a mistake, his fear of having his students "laugh at him in the wrong way," and his fear of putting his own creativity on display. He recalls, "I had to overcome my own fear of reading a story I had written to them ... fear that they would laugh at me and not think it was very good."

The Next Destination

Ken finished his second year on the Professional Growth Option in 1992-93. Washington State law stipulated he must return to the full summative system for one year before resuming his PGO. Ken, however, intended to continue working on his goals for "another five years." He traveled beyond his goal of implementing the mystery writing workshop. His students' zeal for learning carried over to social studies, to cooperatively working together, and to more positive attitudes. What was originally a writing curriculum goal grew into a whole language approach. Ken created activities for a mystery writing workshop. Components such as the use of magnifying glasses, forensics, and interviewing eyewitnesses lent themselves readily to integration with science activities.

As Ken looks to the future, he speaks excitedly of next year's plan: "I can foresee a time when we can take kids' stories back to small groups and choose the ones they want and make them into plays. Play production seems like a natural flow once they have written the stories. We'll choose

the mysteries we like, put in sound effects, have some audience participation, and have six or seven groups coming up with plays. That's where I'm headed."

Advice to "Travel Guides"

What advice would Ken give to those committed to facilitating professional growth? Administrators need to provide the type of support he received from his building leader. "There has to be an administrator," he said, "who will truly support you, and not just give lip service — someone who will be sincere and encourage you to take risks. Because if it's not sincere, then you'll pick that up and feel like, 'Gee. I don't want to risk looking foolish.'" His advice to teachers included the following:

- **Go with gusto!**
- **See what you can uncover and discover,** and all the new things you can learn.
- **Take a risk.** Don't worry if the class is a little bit out of control or if things don't go perfectly. As a matter of fact, if things went perfectly then I would be suspect. And out of all the stretching and the discoveries, you as a person will grow and education really will become more enjoyable.

After 22 years experience, Ken described his past year on the Professional Growth Option as "my best year of teaching, literally. This has been such a great year, and great kids. Things have worked out so well!"

"There has to be an administrator who will truly support you, and not just give lip service — someone who will be sincere and encourage you to take risks."

Forever Innovating, Forever Dreaming

Ann Ludlow
Middle School Core Teacher

The Professional Growth Option provided Ann with the perfect opportunity to make major changes in curriculum and at the same time move closer to the kind of teacher she wanted to be.

Ann Ludlow personifies the many excellent teachers in public schools. Ann knew she was good at her profession, and she knew she never settled for second best. She wanted to improve the curriculum her district had developed. The Professional Growth Option provided Ann with the perfect opportunity to make major changes in the curriculum and at the same time move closer to being the kind of teacher she wanted to be.

A seventh grade core instructor in her sixth year of teaching, Ann's responsibilities included a three-period block of language arts, literature and geography. The block provided a good setting for integrating curriculum. Moreover, Ann served on a planning team for a new, yet-to-open middle school — an ideal opportunity for testing new curriculum ideas. Ann sought change: "We want to become more innovative. There's money for purchasing materials; I don't want to see these funds go for buying another traditional grammar book."

Ann's district served as one of the thirteen state pilot projects for formative evaluation. Enthused colleagues who participated in the district pilot had extolled to Ann the merits of the Professional Growth Option. They agreed that the new PGO encourages innovation in the classroom. And as an added bonus, the district provided funds to support individual goals!

Frustrated by the low-feedback annual observation from her administrator, she proclaimed, "The summative evaluation is an obligatory action on both our parts. I've always hoped there might be something more beneficial for both the evaluator and the person being evaluated." Ann's hopes

were not in vain. Because she had completed her fourth year of satisfactory teaching, she was eligible for the recently developed PGO. Her building administrator supported the PGO process and invited her to choose goals addressing her curriculum concerns. Ann recalls, "My principal advised me to go the PGO route, that it might assist me in piloting a new language arts curriculum."

My primary concern has been curricular. What I am advocating is teaching students the writing process, which is a different approach from what my colleagues are doing. I'm working with some fine professionals who have been teaching with the textbook for a number of years, and are — for the most part — satisfied with it. But I need to try something more meaningful, more innovative. And before I can comfortably encourage others to use new methods or materials, I must first test them for myself.

"The summative evaluation is an obligatory action on both our parts. I've always hoped there might be something more beneficial for both the evaluator and the person being evaluated."

First Year Goals

Ann's first year goal on the PGO was to investigate computer writing programs. She also planned to instruct students in computer use, including word processing. In addition, Ann aspired to devise portfolios containing samples of students' writing.

During this initial year on the PGO, she purchased the **Write Source** materials. Consequently, students expanded their word processing skills as they developed writing portfolios. High student interest and successful new skills' acquisition spurred Ann to continue this goal into her second PGO year — the year she was interviewed for this study. She also decided to integrate writing, literature, and geography and to increase the quantity and quality of writing on computers.

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The Solo Episode

Essentially her PGO work was a solo experience. She would have liked to work more closely with administrators and colleagues.

Both years on the PGO Ann informally discussed her classroom innovations with others in her building, but essentially her PGO work was a solo experience. She would have liked to work more closely with administrators and colleagues. Lack of contact with other teachers integrating writing into their programs presented a challenge for Ann. She said, "The lack of brainstorming, sharing and pooling ideas was an impediment. Encouraging each other remains nonexistent. Instead of going on all by myself, it would be beneficial and fun to work on these goals with someone else. I think I would broaden the ideas available to me by teaming with someone else."

Although lack of collegial support proved frustrating, an even bigger challenge was lack of time. As the second year progressed, Ann found her new writing curriculum was taking considerably more time than the traditional grammar textbook curriculum. The large class size and varying abilities of the students daunted her. Reading and assessing student portfolios, along with planning integrated lessons, proved very time consuming.

Ongoing Assessment

Despite the obstacles, Ann observed exciting changes in student learning. In assessing her goals, Ann realized her students had accomplished a great deal: "My kids ... have moved away from, 'When are we going to open the grammar book and turn to page 44 for exercise A?' I see their willingness and desire to write and rewrite. I can see the growth in the portfolio samples." Additionally, Ann's students mastered the computer. She observed that most of their questions now focused on writing content rather than word processing.

By the end of the second year, her concerns with the new curriculum diminished; she recognized that the change process is ongoing: "I will always be integrating the curriculum and assessing my teaching. The PGO provided a

model through which I could do continuous self-assessment. I had the responsibility for evaluating myself during the year, so it was ongoing and very honest. It is far more realistic and effective than the summative evaluation."

Assorted Issues

Ann faced a variety of issues during the course of her PGO. They included funding for growth activities, her graduate studies, the evolutionary nature of her goals, and time management.

Ann's progress on the PGO depended on the availability of funds. "The building allotment was $240 per teacher," she recalled, "My resources, however, must have run about $325. An angel — I guess in the district office — covered the difference. So I not only had my PGO allotment, but funds from somewhere."

"The PGO provided a model through which I could do continuous self-assessment. I had the responsibility for evaluating myself during the year, so it was ongoing and very honest."

Ann's PGO goals evolved at the same time she was working on her Master's degree. "It ended up that my Master's research was really on portfolio assessment," she indicated. "So, some of the support I received was through my Master's degree work."

Professionals like Ann continue to push onward to higher plateaus:

> *I don't think my goals are reachable because I keep moving them on further and further. I am feeling good about the progress toward my goal, but as I work with those goals, I either extend them, or it's just like last year. I focused within language arts skills. Now I've broadened that into literature and geography. So, I guess I keep moving that carrot forward.*

A Frustration with Time

No time to plan. Too little time to collaborate. Teachers everywhere can sympathize with Ann's dilemma:

PGO offered me the opportunity to really look at being innovative in the classroom — and I have lots of dreams, lots of ideas out there. The problem is finding time. Currently, I really use my prep time very functionally, answering telephone calls, filling out forms, getting back to the principal with something in writing. It's not a learning time for me, nor a time to develop the curriculum within my classroom. Also, because of the staggered planning periods, very few staff members are free at the same time. So it's not as though the seventh grade core teachers are doing much planning unless we do it outside of the day on our own time. So, time for me to expand the results of my PGO is imperative. In a building like ours, I have four special education mainstream kids in my day, with very little time for adapting the curriculum to them unless I do it on my own. So planning time — I don't want to say that it's a joke — but I call it maintenance time. Planning time is eight o'clock at home when I'm probably a little less inspired and not being inspired by my fellow teachers.

Recognition, Satisfaction

Ann's greatest satisfaction with the PGO resulted when her colleagues recognized her efforts by emulating them at the about-to-be-opened middle school. Her fellow seventh grade teachers adopted the ***Write Source*** materials Ann had used during her two years on the PGO; in addition, they decided to work as a team to integrate the three subject areas: language arts, literature, geography.

By taking charge of her own professional development with all its joys and frustrations, she learned, her students learned, and her colleagues benefited from her experiences.

Ann believes, "The PGO will professionalize all you do in the classroom." At the end of her last interview she offered strategies for PGO success:

- **Don't set goals with boundaries;**
- **Be innovative;**
- **Decide carefully what you want to work on;**
- **Find someone who will provide support for you;**

- **Encourage administrators to become involved.**

Ann Ludlow's journey led her to undertake major curricular and instructional changes. By taking charge of her own professional development, with all its joys and frustrations, she grew, her students learned, and her colleagues benefited from her experiences.

Rediscovering Familiar Territory

Elise Cambio: Lives Touched, Lives Changed

Can a change in an evaluation system transform a teacher's professional growth? For Elise Cambio, first grade teacher, the answer is a resounding, "Yes!"

Elise, a 16-year educator, teaches in a 50-year-old building boasting a stable staff. Robert, her principal, is new to the building, however. Robert and Elise took a class together in formative evaluation and goal-setting the August before the school year began. As a part of this class, they spent time brainstorming a number of goals she might work on that fall. During the class they also spent time clarifying her goals and crafting tentative plans for achieving the goals in the fall.

The Decision to Embark

Elise first heard about the Professional Growth Option from building colleagues on the district evaluation committee. When they introduced the program at a faculty meeting, she decided to embark on the PGO journey:

> *I guess I thought it would make me a bit stronger. I always have goals set in my mind, but I never say them out loud — things I would like to do better. Saying them out loud to a principal and getting some help is going to make me actually work toward my goals. Plus, after I took the formative evaluation class, I felt more comfortable with the PGO.*

"Conventional teacher evaluation did not encourage Elise to take risks: "You always want it to go well, so you often take a safer course."

Charting the Course

Elise selected her goals for personal reasons, though they would not be characterized as personal goals. Her first goal

involved student self-esteem. Because she and her husband participated in therapeutic foster care, they encountered adolescents from very dysfunctional families. Elise knew firsthand how negative influences in a child's life could adversely affect self-esteem, especially as the child grew older.

Because of this experience, Elise was determined to examine her classroom interactions with students for traces of negativity. She decided, for example, to discipline students without using "put-downs."

Her second goal stemmed from a writing class which convinced her that first graders could accomplish much more original writing than she had expected. The traditional first grade curriculum emphasized copying sentences, developing children's mastery of manuscript form, and learning basic reading skills:

> *I'm emphasizing more grammar elements I want to see incorporated in writing. ... Just because kids can do the grammar in a sentence or sentences I put on the board, does not mean it transfers to their own writing. So I'm working more toward reminding them of what they need to have, where it needs to go, hoping that there will be more transfer to their own individual writing — even in the little notes that they bring me. First grade girls write a lot of 'love notes' to their teacher. I look at that and sometimes, if the time is right, ask them about what they need at the beginning and the end of the sentence.*

Meaningless Evaluations

An experienced teacher, Elise was evaluated numerous times by numerous supervisors. These previous experiences on the summative evaluation system, however, were less than satisfying, and not particularly helpful. In some ways evaluation proved frustrating because it tended to dwell on personalities, she said. Evaluations were rarely executed

before the first part of June when the principal arrived, notepad in hand. The principal wrote vigorously for a half hour. Then, that was it for another year.

Elise found this process artificial: "You know exactly why the administrator is there. The kids see the notepad, and know exactly why the principal is there. The one page form contains the same little nice ways of saying things and everything is checked off satisfactorily. It meets the letter of the law. But where is the benefit? Where are the suggestions for change?" She saw the process as a waste of teachers' and administrators' time: "It's not a realistic picture of what's going on in a classroom. I don't think it gives a clear picture of what you're doing and what you want to do. It does not portray all the hopes you start out with in September."

One disappointment of her PGO, Elise notes, was a lack of emotional or peer support. She would have appreciated a support group of teachers on the PGO in her building. As it was, her principal provided the main support.

Furthermore, conventional teacher evaluation did not encourage Elise to take risks: "You always want it to go well, so you often take a safer course." Her feelings for the PGO were in marked contrast: "I feel more freedom within the Professional Growth Option. I can encourage my students to reach out. They are capable of more than I see. I have an opportunity to find out just how far I can take them."

At Times a Lonely Journey

One disappointment of her PGO, Elise noted, was a lack of peer support. Her principal stayed in close contact with her throughout the year: "I felt he was very supportive. All the way along and throughout the year he fed me articles and pamphlets and things that dealt with my goals." Yet, more peer support "would have helped a lot. I would have liked somebody to talk to, to bounce things off of, and I think I could have found that. But teachers, particularly first grade teachers, find it difficult to arrange the time to talk to each other about school." She added that she would have appreciated a support group of teachers on the PGO in her building. As it was, her principal provided the main support.

He's checked in with us, but he's remained in the background. So we've really felt like we were totally in charge, yet he was there if we wanted to ask questions or talk about it. I think administrators need to be careful to give their people the space they need. Checking in on a regular basis is important. You know, "Well, how is it going?" "Is there something you need?" "How are you feeling?" Those kinds of questions are important.

Elise was not aware of any district funds available to support her PGO goals. The only direct district support she indicated were "wonderful" demonstration lessons by a visiting educational consultant. She could have opted to attend staff development conferences, but because of her experience and skill with students with behavioral problems, and the high number of those needy students assigned to her classroom, she worried "about having a substitute coming in. For some of my kids having a substitute is a traumatic experience."

A Different Kind of Risk

Elise felt no threat to her job under the standard "short form" evaluation system, but the degree of freedom she felt with the new PGO system opened her up to an unexpected challenge — the risk of being disappointed in her own performance on goals she had set for herself.

"I think administrators need to be careful to give their people the space they need."

"It's more an internal risk. I don't feel particularly threatened in my position ... because I know I do a good job with the kids. But, it is how I perceive success, and how I deal with it emotionally." Elise reported that the risk of failure was measured only by her own internal self-evaluation. Under the PGO she set expectations for herself that went beyond those traditionally set for her by her evaluator.

Mileposts

Assessment of progress was not a formal part of Elise's goal statements, but she tracked her progress nonetheless. She

reported accomplishing some goals, seeing some positive results in the amount and quality of student writing. Her students were writing more often:

> *I saw the kids doing more writing on their own. I was really impressed and amazed at the stories the kids would write. They were simple, but the students couldn't wait to get to the computer to type their story and to print it. The stories ranged from the very simple to fairly complex.*

Elise also made progress trying to use a more positive form of student management and discipline. She believed she was doing a better job than if she had not written goals or participated in the PGO:

> *I have done quite a bit of reading and have really changed my classroom. I'm working to make the students more comfortable, more confident with what they're doing so that they don't need to be afraid. I had a lot of kids who were held back this year. So I did a lot to make them feel free to take a risk, to share something ... to not feel bad because they don't know everything.*
>
> *I noticed the kids who were insecure becoming even more confident than I've seen in the past because I was sharing with them on a more personal level, encouraging them, and trying to be more aware of what might be scary to them.*

Without surveys or research on her students to verify successes, Elise felt she was her "own worst critic," and that she probably did more than she was giving herself credit for.

Unexpected Directions

The PGO took Elise in new directions; she searched out opportunities she previously would have missed. Her new interest in early writing caused her to volunteer her classroom for a demonstration on direct teaching techniques.

And when Elise talked about her self-esteem goal, she said she longed to search out people in the district who "were doing more." She also discovered two Macintosh computers belonging to Chapter One sitting idle in a central office basement. Since a number of her students qualified for Chapter One funds, she utilized the computers:

> *When I took the formative evaluation class this summer, my big wild fantasy was to have a Mac in my classroom. Now, I have a Macintosh in my classroom with a 2E card so I can use MECC (Minnesota Educational Computer Consortium) software, and I have a least one writing program on it. And I'm going to consider other programs of this type.*

Elise sees other growth possibilities in the future. She longs, for example, to investigate expanded computer use in her first grade classroom. She continues to grow, continues to dream — as she helps both the abused child in her foster home and the first grader at school. Hers is a journey that touches — and changes — lives.

Under the PGO she set expectations for herself that went beyond those traditionally set for her by her evaluator.

One More Bridge to Student Learning

Kristin Cavanaugh
Four-year PGO Veteran

Kristin Cavanaugh, a hard working, creative teacher with 14 years' experience to her credit, is comfortable with change. Previously, she taught English as a Second Language (ESL) and philosophy. She now inspires high school English students. She possesses a contagious enthusiasm about her profession and enjoys trying new methods and curriculum in cooperation with colleagues. Why would a highly motivated achiever like Kristin need the Professional Growth Option?

Armed with annual evaluations and check lists, Kristin's administrators over the years rated her an effective educator, giving her only positive feedback. Still she never found these evaluations very helpful or reinforcing. Kristin stated,

I always found it very disconcerting to have an administrator walk into my room and sit down. We always tried to let each other know when they were making the rounds. I found students didn't act the same when the principal was in the room. We were all kind of on edge. I always had very positive evaluations. I've never received a negative one, but I always thought the process [of summative evaluation] was artificial.

"I always thought the process [of summative evaluation] was artificial. I had never really felt that I got anything out of the regular evaluation process. I thought it was a rather useless process and disruptive to the classroom as well."

When she heard about an alternative evaluation system being offered in her district, she was among the first to volunteer. Why? Kristin responds,

There were a couple of reasons. First, I had never really felt that I got anything out of the regular evaluation process. I though it was a rather useless process and disruptive to the classroom as well. And, secondly, I saw it as an opportunity to be able to do a few things that I wanted to with some assistance within the school ... some things I might not have tried otherwise.

Kristin viewed the PGO as a means of gaining recognition and support for the kinds of challenges she wanted to undertake.

Cycle On, Cycle Off

Each year on the PGO she developed a new goal, while continuing to work on many of the previous years' goals. By the spring of 1993, she ranked as a PGO veteran. Previously, she spent two years on the PGO, cycled back to the summative cycle for one year, and returned to the PGO. Kristin was interviewed during the second year of her second PGO cycle.

As she experienced professional growth and how it made her feel, she developed an interest in how she, as an individual, could impact the education system as a whole.

During her first cycle she pursued ***methods goals.*** Kristin started off working on cooperative learning skills with her high school English class. The second year she moved on to developing activities which addressed different learning styles. After she cycled off the PGO, Kristin continued to work on her methods goals, opting not to pay much attention to the summative evaluation.

In her third year on the Professional Growth Option, Kristin collaborated with a colleague, designing a two-hour interdisciplinary course. The course combined philosophy and psychology, and was intended to be team taught in a two-hour block. The year of our study, Kristin's goal was to develop a two-hour English block for freshmen which incorporated a writing workshop. Her three sub-goals included incorporating portfolio assessment of writing, peer editing, and writing conferences.

Impacting the Educational System

Kristin sought ways to improve her English classes when she first became involved with the PGO. At that point, she was not thinking beyond the walls of her own classroom. As she experienced professional growth and how it made her feel, she developed an interest in how she, as an indi-

vidual, could impact the education system as a whole. She came to believe that educators should scrutinize how they structured time and activities for students. They should make education more relevant to today's world.

> *I am really into the idea of restructuring in schools and looking at how we use time, looking at how we provide bridges in student learning. So, these last two years have been a reflection of the belief that we can do a better job. Even the two prior years of developing cooperative learning and the learning styles activities reflected the idea that we need to provide many opportunities for kids who learn in different ways. This is all part of that restructuring. Everything I've done reflects that.*

An Unexpected Benefit

By piloting classes that addressed interdisciplinary curricula, variations in time blocking, and team teaching, she could reach beyond her own classroom and affect changes in her building. Kristin then joined district-wide committees dealing with restructuring. As a result of serving on these committees, she was invited to join a team planning a new high school; one of its goals entailed the restructuring of time blocks and interdisciplinary teaching. She piloted different models, sharing her new knowledge and information with others. During the course of our study, she never completed her English goal because she was hired as an instructional leader — a House Facilitator — in the new high school. Thus, Kristin's Professional Growth experiences led to a position where she could affect the restructuring of schools in her district.

During the time Kristin worked on her goals, she received support from her administrator and colleagues. She said she had always maintained a good working relationship with her principal and that he helped her brainstorm ideas concerning her goals and ways to evaluate them. Her principal willingly observed, gave feedback, and provided release time and funds for classes. Due to a budget crunch,

however, very little funding was available her final year. Money was not the only form of support for Kristin's PGO. Other teachers played a significant role as well:

> *Groups of us have been supportive of each other and interested in similar teaching strategies. The administration has also been very supportive. I think mostly what we do is bounce ideas off each other. When we have a problem, we talk to each other about how to handle it. We share ideas and work well together.*

Sailing — Smooth and Stormy

Although Kristin felt supported in her PGO work, she didn't always find it smooth sailing. Some resistance within the building and in her department rippled the waters. "Why restructure?" several colleagues queried.

Kristin also faced the challenge of time management. How would she balance personal and professional demands? Would the desire to be very involved in change result in "total burn out"?

Kristin also faced the challenge of time management. How would she balance personal and professional demands? Would the desire to be very involved in change result in "total burn out"?

When she left her position and moved to the new high school, Kristin knew she had progressed toward her goal. She was developing an understanding of change. She also found that in a two-hour teaching block she needed to create more variety in her instructional methods and materials: "You can't just lecture for two hours. You have to develop a different approach." What about her writing workshop ambitions? She responded, "I think it's going to be an evolutionary process, rather than, 'Well, now I've done it.'"

Four Years on the PGO

How had four years on the PGO goals affected Kristin's style? In her words,

> *I found I have to organize myself a lot better. You have to pull more tricks out of the hat. ... I think that rather*

than saying I'm teaching, I'm trying to facilitate more so that students are taking more ownership in the process of their writing. I guess that's a shift of focus.

Extended blocks of time allowed students more minutes to fully engage in an activity and then evaluate it without interruption. And the emphasis on writing helped these young writers understand the components and importance of writing.

Reflecting

If she had a the PGO to do over again, would she do anything differently? Kristin said she would probably concentrate on one thing at a time: "I would try not to do so much at one time."

Perceived risks did not hinder Kristin in achieving her goals; instead, her tendency to assume anything and everything was possible foiled her plans at times. In setting her own goals, she realized she was accepting a challenge:

I think it is probably easier in some respects to have the administrator come in a couple of times a year to see if you have a nice bulletin board. With the PGO, you put the pressure on yourself. So I don't think I ever consciously thought of it as a risk.

During her four years on the PGO, Kristin's view of conventional teacher evaluation changed for the better:

Having done the PGO the first time, I felt really empowered. When I cycled off the PGO and was evaluated again, it was a different feeling. I didn't feel like the principal was coming in to critique me. We had become partners in the whole evaluation process.

She felt as if she were on a more equal footing with her administrator. They could sit down together, discuss what she wanted to do, and then create a goal: "When you set your own evaluation procedures, you become more accepted

as a professional. It's more like consulting with the administrator than asking permission. The whole tone is more professional."

"When you set your own evaluation procedures, you become more accepted as a professional."

What advice would Kristin give to others selecting the PGO?

Play with it. Enjoy it. Don't work too hard. You know I believe we are harder on ourselves than anyone else could be. It is difficult to pull back and say, "Okay, I'm not going to do too much because I do want to be successful." If we set our own goals, we want to reach those goals. So we need to be realistic with what we do. Feel free to take risks and try out new things.

That Enduring Teacher Spirit

Jim Andrews: Veteran Educator at Sunset

The previous case studies highlighted four teachers whose experiences with the Professional Growth Option proved positive. The following case study tells a very different story. This teacher, in the second year of the two-year "short-form" cycle, pursued one goal over the course of the two years. He developed the goal on his own, used no district resources to work on the goal, and had minimal discussions with his principal and colleagues about his efforts. In fact, few teachers in his building chose to participate in the Professional Growth Option. His first year's efforts were successful, but his second year proved a frustrating experience with less than satisfactory results. By the end of year two, Jim expressed relief that he would no longer have to work on his goal.

This story deals less with failure than the perseverance of the teacher spirit. Contacted for clarifications on his interview responses after the research period concluded, Jim reported he had changed his mind over the summer: despite the fact that he had returned to the summative evaluation process and was in the final year of his lengthy career, Jim decided to pursue his professional growth goal, just to give it one more try.

This story deals less with failure than the perseverance of the teacher spirit.

Why would a teacher near the end of his teaching career choose the Professional Growth Option? At age sixty-one Jim Andrews ranked as the most veteran of the teachers involved in the study. Called the Alternative Evaluation Program in his district, this option had been rejected by Jim in its early years. He preferred the more familiar evaluation format where his principal observed him for sixty minutes annually to determine if he met the minimum competency criteria established by the state legislature. His principal lamented:

It seems like the teachers in this school are actually more interested in staying with the old, than going with the new system. I think I had five or six people this year on the alternative system. Most of those people are going to cycle off. And I don't see a lot of other people interested in coming on to the formative evaluation system.

"Why Are More Students Failing?"

When approached by his district in the fall of 1991 to consider the Professional Growth Option, Jim finally decided — after reading the principal's PGO memos for five years — that the program would give him an opportunity to address a growing area of deep concern: Why were so many students failing his high school science classes? The basic structure and expectations of the courses had changed little over the 33 years of his career, but in previous years students regularly did the work with fewer incidences of failure. During the last few years, Jim was failing more students than most of his colleagues. This development disturbed him.

"It seems like the teachers in this school are actually more interested in staying with the old, than going with the new system."

In addition to regarding the PGO as "less threatening" than the traditional evaluation, Jim also viewed the new process as involving less paperwork:

It just seemed like the easier way out. When they come in for the other evaluations, we have to fill out papers beforehand. This (new system) has one piece of paperwork primarily, and that's your write-up in the spring detailing how you've succeeded.

A Teacher Wonders

A self-described loner when it came to developing curriculum or dealing with classroom discipline issues, Jim embarked on his first PGO year without consulting colleagues or administrators for ideas. As he considered the possible strategies he could use to reduce student failure, Jim realized that, although he contacted parents often regard-

ing a failing student, he was rarely satisfied with the results. "Before, if I called a parent once a year, generally that would be it. I'd tell them their child was not doing this, not doing that, and if there was no follow-up, I just let the student fail." What if he could obtain more parental involvement in the academic performance of failing students? Could he reduce the rate of student failure? Jim wondered.

Jim developed a parental contact system in the early fall of 1991. At the end of the first quarter a letter of concern was sent to parents of students at risk of failure. Following that letter, each student was given an assignment schedule on Friday for the upcoming week. The schedule was to be taken home, signed by a parent and returned on Monday. The subsequent Friday the form was sent home listing the grades for completed assignments, notations regarding non-completed assignments, and the upcoming week's schedule. Jim then made follow-up phone calls to parents when forms were not returned on Monday or returned unsigned.

No discussion occurred between Jim and his principal once the system was in place. Throughout the first year of the new system, Jim revised the process a couple of times, making it more efficient. At the end of year one on the PGO, he turned in a report to his principal that included, as evidence, the high percentage of grade increases in the class. No conversation ensued regarding the report; his principal simply returned it with comments. "I was pleased and he seemed pleased with the results," Jim recalled.

Year Two Blues

Buoyed by the success of the first year, Jim made no adjustments to his system in year two, nor did he add any additional goals. In his judgment:

> *Parental involvement makes a great difference. Just giving some of those kids special attention made a great difference with the students themselves. I had one boy go from an F to a C, and he would have received a B had he turned in a notebook. In his case it*

was just because of the attention he was getting. Suddenly I was his friend and therefore he worked for me. I would say that probably half of my failing students picked up and passed.

And what of Jim's concern about reducing the amount of time involved in the traditional evaluation process? Ironically, any time saved on principal observations and conferences was offset by the considerable time it took for him to monitor his new parental contact system. Was the extra effort worth it? Jim reflected on the success of his efforts:

I felt that whenever the principal came in to observe me, all I had to fill out beforehand was the little form about what you're going to do. Well, that's extra work for me. And I had been at it so long, I didn't need that kind of extra work.

This PGO ended up time-wise being much more time consuming, but I was aiming for positive results. It's not going to help the students for the principal to come in and observe me. But this system did help the students, and that's probably why I didn't worry about the time.

And what of Jim's concern about reducing the amount of time involved in the traditional evaluation process? Ironically, any time saved on principal observations and conferences was offset by the considerable time it took for him to monitor his new parental contact system.

By late fall in the 1992-93 school year, Jim was becoming increasingly discouraged by failures in his parental contact system:

The overall return on the forms has not been very good. The first year was much more successful. Last year parents really responded. This year there's been a very mediocre response from parents. After the first week I called all of those parents. Some were aware of the form, one or two were not aware of it, but most had seen the copy. I still don't get the form back at the end of the week so I can return it to students on Monday. If I pushed harder I could probably get more parents directly involved, but how much time do you take and push a parent?

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The few parents who did return forms were sufficiently pleased with the new system to convince Jim to continue it through the rest of the year:

> *I have some parents who are following up on their child and making sure they are doing the work. They're making the student read the book, if nothing else. Whereas before, this was not happening. So it's working in some cases. I can't say that I'm totally satisfied, but anything that picks the student up makes me happier.*

Jim's frustration also was fueled by the increasing demands the district and his school were putting on the after school time he normally reserved for students needing additional assistance: "We have so many other meetings. I would be sitting in a room somewhere listening to something else, and not be able to help students right after school. That takes away from the students."

Is There Any Hope?

During that second winter Jim attempted to increase his phone contacts with parents when the forms were not returned. Even this strategy did not significantly increase the return rate. In fact, his feelings of futility were only heightened. "After a few noncommittal calls, you get tired of it. I mean its kind of a burnout if they're not going to take their responsibilities seriously. I feel like I'm hitting a brick wall."

Although his principal periodically asked how things were going, he offered no specific suggestions. Jim admitted that he did not ask his principal for ideas.

By year's end Jim expressed relief that the following year he would leave the Alternative Evaluation System: "I mean it's just a matter of a little less worry." He also offered the following advice to administrators working with teachers on professional growth: "Be a little more critical and follow up more on the problem areas. Teachers need a little more

guidance in the goal-setting process and what type of goals they should be looking at. I just kind of stumbled onto mine."

"It is my last year as a teacher ... I just want to see if I can make the system work this year."

Interest in PGO Reform

Contacted at the beginning of the 1993-94 school year for a follow-up interview, Jim reported that, although he was back on the traditional "short form" evaluation, he had decided to continue the parental contact system with a minor modification:

> *It's my last year as a teacher, and darn it, I just want to see if I can make the system work this year. The system worked so well the first year, and last year it didn't; but every group of students and their parents is different. This year I'm going to send the weekly schedule to all parents of failing students. If there isn't a response from a particular parent after a few tries, I'm going to send that parent a letter telling them I'm going to discontinue the system for their student. Some students really do benefit, and I don't want to give up because a few parents don't care.*

4

Principals' Perceptions

Teacher after teacher in our study referred to an administrator's impact on the professional growth experience. Although principals had not been included in the original design of the research project, the teachers' responses indicated a need for input from supervisors. Sixteen out of 23 principals were available for interviews; all nine districts were represented in the results. The administrators ranged in experience from first-year principals to one with a year to go before retirement.

Our principals varied significantly in their perceptions of both summative and formative teacher evaluation systems.

The principal's comments covered four primary categories: ***Attitudes Toward Teacher Evaluation; the Administrative Role in Professional Growth; Challenges Facing Principals;*** *and,* ***Impact on Teaching and Student Learning.***

Attitudes Toward Teacher Evaluation

Our principals varied significantly in their perceptions of the traditional summative teacher evaluation system. A minority remained committed to the traditional summative model for everyone. Their justifications are captured below.

The Tried and True

- ***The summative system offers more reinforcement and support.*** One principal noted that most teachers don't receive enough positive reinforcement. He believed the summative process makes teachers feel rewarded and appreciated.

The summative is a starting place for beginning teachers; the formative stretches old pros.

- ***Teachers are comfortable with the old system and do not want a new, more difficult system, requiring more work.*** "They are more comfortable with what they're already doing and don't want to be forced into some changes," stated one principal.

- ***The summative evaluation model is effective.*** One administrator said, "I still believe in sitting down with teachers for a pre-conference, an observation, and a post-conference. Using an agreed upon instructional model in building goals gives more opportunities for reflection on instructional skills and allows for more professional instructional growth."

- ***Some teachers require more supervision than the PGO provides.*** Supervisory concerns arose about less than satisfactory teachers: "The only reservation I have about the formative evaluation model is that everybody can be on it, and for some teachers it's not appropriate."

The New and the Formative

Most administrators lauded the new Professional Growth Option as the best choice overall for encouraging teacher growth and empowerment, particularly for skilled, experienced teachers. In the past, these principals had found themselves circumventing or altering the summative process in order to encourage effective teachers. Approval for the formative process caused one principal to exclaim: "I think [the formative system] is fantastic. I think everybody should be on it. I'd do away with the summative if I had a choice."

The summative system focuses on minimum criteria established by state mandate. ***The conventional system is not a good growth tool, proponents of the formative system commented.***

- **The conventional system becomes a game.** The summative system is not an effective evaluation tool because it does not facilitate professional growth. "It's always been, let's play the game. I'll do the

tricks, you tell me what you think, 'Can I do what you and your paper say I need to do?'"

- **Individual experiences, projects, and goals are not reflected on the summative form.** Administrators said they could discuss and validate teacher growth goals, but "when it comes to actually marking, the summative form is limited. The format does not give a lot of feedback."

- **Formative evaluation changes teacher-principal relations.** Whereas the summative evaluation model emphasizes the hierarchy of supervision, the formative tool creates a more collegial relationship between the supervisor and the teacher.

- **The new PGO can affect an entire learning organization**. Teachers experience self-directed growth and empowerment which they often pass along in one form or another to students.

Administrative Role in Teachers' Professional Growth

Most administrators said they launched teacher goal-setting campaigns in the fall. Building-wide brainstorming and discussion of goals also occurred early in the school year. Some principals asked teachers to formulate individual goals or use building/district goals as their basis. Others asked teachers to submit individual requests for funds tied to goals. One principal employed cognitive coaching in instigating individual goal-setting. Often, these supervisors readdressed goal-setting at midyear inservices or in individual or group conferences.

How Much is Too Much?

Administrators struggled with how much help to give teachers in goal-setting. If teachers lack training in setting professional goals, who is responsible? The colleges? The districts? One principal believed teachers need to take responsibility for their own growth. Another argued, "We haven't done a good job explaining to teachers what the

Administrators struggled with how much help to give teachers in goal-setting.

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possibilities are. We haven't shown good models of what they can do with this time and money."

Many principals voiced concerns over how much direction to give teachers. One initially held back from giving too much help in order to foster a sense of teacher freedom of choice and decision making. This supervisor added, "But I sensed that after the first couple of months ... in some cases the teacher was asking for more help on how to set realistic goals."

How did principals view their role in the teacher goal-setting process? Responses varied:

- **The principal's job is to promote experimentation.** "We encourage risk taking. ... If you're not making mistakes, you're not succeeding."
- **Teachers are autonomous and require only a supervisor-advisor.** "Teachers on the PGO develop goals on their own, and then just sit down with me and explain what they're trying to do. It is at that point that I help ... to make [the process] more specific and assessable, and help identify the steps or mini-goals."
- **The principal is a colleague who gains a better understanding of the teacher.** The least directive principal noted, "I have to keep an open mind because I don't want to think that my view is the right view. Their view might be the right view."

Redirecting Goals

What happens when a principal questions the merit of a teacher-selected goal? A range of responses included vetoing the goal, declaring the goal inappropriate, using questioning strategies to redirect the teacher, or yielding to the teacher's judgment.

Direct questioning helped principals redirect teachers. "There is nothing that stops me from asking a teacher, 'How does that relate to student learning?' Or, 'How does that help you in the classroom?'" Strongly suggesting a

course of action by using these point blank questions usually redirected teachers. However, one principal said that if a teacher refused to modify a goal to meet student learning needs, he would allow the teacher that freedom.

Other supervisors used less direct questioning techniques to help point teachers towards goals which would impact student learning in the classroom: "Tell me a little more about what you're thinking about this. Why is this important to you?"

Challenges Facing Principals

Six challenges related to the Professional Growth Option were identified by our 16 principals:

- ***A lack of supervisory knowledge, skills, and training;***
- ***Inadequate time to schedule appointments with teachers;***
- ***Pressures and issues in the administrative environment which push principals toward encouraging particular growth areas;***
- ***Insufficient money and resources to help support growth;***
- ***Dealing with marginal teachers on the PGO;***
- ***Persuading teachers to go onto the PGO.***

Training

One district provided no specific training for principals. Three districts brought in a consultant to work with administrators. The remaining five districts utilized administrative training meetings. Consultant- and district-led training topics ranged from skill development, questioning and communication strategies, orientation to the district's PGO system, options available to teachers under the PGO, and

collaborative goal-setting. Principals on the PGO said they often desired more training in being a good communicator, remaining current as a source of information, providing encouragement to their hard-working staffs, and functioning effectively within the changed role of the principal.

Time

Three principals indicated the PGO system took more time than the standard observations and pre- and post-conferences. Seven said it took less time; six commented about the changed nature of the time spent evaluating. The new system altered supervisor-teacher interactions, causing principals to note more time spent in professional conversation with teachers, recognizing successes, and building trust: "It takes more time because you really get into brainstorming with a teacher. Those creative juices start to flow. And you meet at different times to make things happen — to work with the teacher on resources and ways of accomplishing a given goal. I think it's a more rewarding and a more fun type of discussion."

Collegiality

Others noted that in cases where two or more teachers were working together, the teachers enhanced each other's PGO growth. Therefore, growth did not have to depend exclusively on the principal. Administrators who had instituted a series of group meetings with PGO teachers wished they had facilitated more such occasions throughout the year. Both teachers and principal found these meetings useful but difficult to schedule.

Impact on Teaching and Student Learning

What effect does the PGO system have on teaching and student learning? Twelve of our sixteen administrators said they observed a positive impact on teaching and student

learning. None cited any negative impacts; four gave neutral answers. More teacher control over evaluation increased commitment, some noted; others cited an increase in the level of professional discussions among staff.

A plethora of reforms today makes sorting out effects of the PGO on student achievement difficult. Other school improvement plans simultaneously might be impacting student progress. Outstanding teachers are drawn to the PGO-type of system, one principal noted, so any positive effects could be the result of that teacher's overall effectiveness and not the PGO system.

Ownership

Shifting the locus of control for growth from the principal to the teacher seemed to improve instruction. Principals said:

> *[The PGO] has positively impacted student outcomes. I believe it's because when people set goals and order materials, they have a higher level of commitment to use learning resources, thus improving student outcomes.*

> *The PGO validates [teachers] as professionals and says, "We're going to recognize what you're doing because we trust and believe in you." So it's like being credited for and recognized as the professionals they really are, and that becomes their evaluation."*

Teacher ownership of the goal-setting process creates professional validation and gives teachers the freedom to experiment with innovative programs.

> *Look at what happens to kids in the classroom. Growing people are happy people. If [teachers] feel like they're moving and growing they will also do that with their kids. This kind of a model is exactly the kind of thing that we want to have happen with kids in the classroom. We want to have kids in control of their own learning, to be able to find resources, to have their needs met.*

Teacher ownership of the goal-setting process creates professional validation and gives teachers the freedom to experiment with innovative programs.

Freedom from Fear

The risk-free nature of the formative system takes away the fear factor so prevalent in traditional teacher evaluation:

> *Now teachers are being validated with the responsibility of trying something new. I've seen a major change in attitude of teachers. It's okay to try new methods, to try different methods. Then as an administrator, when you're talking with teachers, you're talking about varieties, and you're talking about risks.*

This willingness to take risks seemed to carry over to the students in the classroom: "We can all make mistakes. That is a powerful model for kids, too — to see that adults make mistakes, learn from them and continue to grow."

Collaboration

The risk-free nature of the formative system takes away the fear factor.

Collaboration has been a welcome by-product of the PGO for some teachers. "Teachers have jumped from the single formative option to teaming with somebody. These spin-offs are really encouraging." In schools where a format existed for teachers to discuss their goals with each other and implement peer coaching strategies, principals commented on the increase in collegial interactions between PGO teachers.

Dramatic School-wide Reform

The most dramatic impacts of the PGO system were cited by principals in schools where the PGO process served as the vehicle for reforming the entire school. Principals discussed how the PGO had changed the delivery of instruction:

> *I would say we've gone from seeing about 60 percent of our students getting information delivered with lecture-type methods to less than about five to ten percent of the time in our classrooms. I see all of our teachers going into activity- or mastery-learning type [activities] where students are more involved.*

We took a little idea about assessment and it grew into a major school goal of people looking beyond their formative strand. We said, "Gee, you know, this involves the whole school." And we started looking at other schools doing the big picture on assessment, then at the national picture. We hooked in and wrote an $8,000 grant based on peoples' formative ideas. The spin-offs include an entire changing curriculum. As soon as you start asking kids what they're learning, and find that what you're doing may not be working, you start to change that. This is epidemic around the school.

The most dramatic impacts of the PGO system were cited by principals in schools where the PGO process served as the vehicle for reforming the entire school

The key to school improvement often involves creating and maintaining environments where teachers and other staff members can reflect on their performance, share ideas, and grow. The PGO provides principals with the impetus to move in this direction. Our principals indicated that they appreciated the PGO opportunity and were actively engaged in promoting professional development in their schools.

5

Recommendations for Professional Growth

Unlocking the Door to PGO Success

The time has come to reflect on the significance of **Journeys of Discovery: Promoting Teacher Professional Growth in Washington State** for those in positions to promote the ongoing professional development of teachers.

A Special Group of Teachers

The 23 teachers in our study were chosen because their supervisors believed they were having, or were likely to have, positive experiences with the new PGO. These teachers were among the first in the state to participate under the new regulations. Almost all were volunteers. Does the fact these teachers were committed to professional growth before they took part in the PGO mean our findings should not be taken seriously? Should the absence of a random sample cause our study to be discounted? We think not.

Teachers like those in the study offer insight as to what school districts can do to support their vast pool of dedicated professionals.

Granted, teachers like these we will pursue growth opportunities whether or not a formal PGO exists. We believe, however, that such motivation to improve deserves attention rather than neglect. To take for granted that some teachers will always "find a way" to grow and, therefore, to concentrate scarce time and resources on a relatively small number of teachers who have stagnated professionally would be a serious mistake. Teachers like those in the study offer insight as to what school districts can do to

support their vast pool of dedicated professionals. To let these teachers fend for themselves when it comes to professional growth is to risk the loss — or at least the discouragement — of some of our most valuable "human resources." We, therefore, listened carefully to what our teachers had to say about their Professional Growth Option, and how their journeys might have improved.

No Two Journeys Alike

The case studies in Chapter 3, ***Tales of Five Educators,*** exemplify the uniqueness of all 23 teachers' experiences with the PGO. The quality of each of the 23 journeys varied considerably. Some experienced a smooth and pleasant trip. Others found the PGO a mixture of rough seas and smooth sailing. For other travelers on the road to growth, the course was characterized by frequent stops and interruptions.

Some traveled alone, some with companions. The pace was rapid for many, slow for a few. Perhaps the only feature common to all the journeys was the fact they always led to someplace new. Not one educator characterized the PGO experience as a round trip, bringing them back to where they started. One commented,

> *I would compare this to going down a river, rather than canoeing on a lake, because the scenery changes. Things can get better, and things can get worse, but you end up in a new place that is very exciting.*

Reflecting on their journeys, our teachers offered a wide range of advice to those just beginning a professional growth plan. Seven teachers specifically counseled peers to choose challenging goals. They warned against viewing the PGO as a way to avoid evaluation or hard work. Others, ironically, urged colleagues to "relax and enjoy it," refrain from starting out too ambitiously, and to be realistic about what they can accomplish.

Obviously, professional growth varied greatly for our teachers. Such variation, coupled with teachers' overall enthusi-

asm for the PGO, suggests to us that policies designed to promote the professional growth of experienced teachers should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a variety of experiences. Policy makers should not confuse professional development with staff development. The latter is intended to help groups of teachers grow in a common direction; the former honors the freedom of individual teachers to determine how best to develop professionally.

Policies designed to promote the professional growth of experienced teachers should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a variety of experiences.

We conclude that any policy perceived by teachers to ***require*** professional growth experiences for all teachers reduces the likelihood that professional development will be regarded as meaningful. If mandating growth is not the answer, what, then, can be done to enhance the meaningfulness of professional development? Our teachers offered a wealth of practical advice.

Keys to Professional Development

In 1986, the ***National Education Association***, along with the nations' three largest organizations of school administrators, published a landmark book entitled ***Teacher Evaluation: Five Keys to Growth*** (*Duke and Stiggins 1986*). Joint publication signified that both teachers and administrators agreed that conventional teacher evaluation needed serious reform in order to promote greater professional development. The two researchers who wrote the book — one of whom co-authored ***Journeys of Discovery*** — interviewed teachers and identified forty-four elements of growth-oriented teacher evaluation. These elements were grouped into general categories, referred to as ***Five Keys to Growth.*** The five keys included teacher attributes, supervisor attributes, attributes of data on teacher performance, attributes of performance feedback, and contextual factors.

When advice from our 23 teachers was analyzed, it too was clustered into categories. Interestingly, five categories again surfaced. Four of these five categories — or what our study identifies as ***Keys to Professional Development*** — were comparable to those in the 1986 publication. Only the

Attributes of Data on Teacher Performance category was missing. In its place was a new category: **Quality of Teacher-Supervisor Relationships.** This change comes as no surprise, since the earlier study focused primarily on teachers' experiences with summative evaluation systems, not formative systems such as PGO's. What we heard from our teachers clearly indicated that their relationships with supervisors helped make the PGO experience a success.

The Five Keys to Professional Development

1. Attributes of Teachers

Teachers play a critical role in the evaluation process, acknowledged all 23 participants. In other words, our 23 educators were unwilling to attribute the ultimate responsibility for the fate of professional development solely to their supervisor or school system. Some believed a teacher's "mindset" exerted a great influence on the PGO experience. They advised, for example, that colleagues avoid cynicism and premature judgments of the PGO based on prior negative experiences with reform initiatives. They urged fellow teachers not to rush into goal selection, but to take time to examine non-obvious possibilities and expand their awareness of new developments in education.

Any policy perceived by teachers to require professional growth experiences for all teachers reduces the likelihood that professional development will be regarded as meaningful.

Regarding PGO goals, they counseled against "locking in" to any particular goal if it meant losing the flexibility to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities. They also cautioned that participation in the PGO can be "scary" at times, since teachers are "on their own." Consequently, teachers should be prepared to seek support and assistance, rather than waiting for it to come.

One veteran secondary teacher captured the complex array of feelings implicit in our teachers' advice to their colleagues:

I would tell teachers that [the PGO] is an opportunity to search their souls and see what they would really like to do, not to just find something they think will please someone else. It's the whole idea of ... being honest. It is hard to be honest sometimes and say, "This is what I want for myself and my teaching, and not because it's the buzz word, or because somebody else thinks it's great, or because it will look great on my resume if I accomplish this goal. But for me, personally and professionally. What can I do to improve myself as a person and as a teacher?" And that is just not as easy as it sounds.

Teachers advised that colleagues avoid cynicism and premature judgments of the PGO based on prior negative experiences with reform initiatives.

2. Attributes of Supervisors

Supervisors played important roles in the success of the PGO's. They encouraged risk-taking. They offered patience. Most were cited as helpful. Our teachers advised supervisors everywhere to recognize that most teachers are dedicated professionals perfectly capable of assuming leadership for their own growth. Trusting teachers to take charge of their PGO might require some administrators to change their beliefs about needing to be "in control," observed our participants. They were optimistic, however, that with proper training and the motivation to see the PGO succeed, most supervisors could make the adjustments necessary to become "partners" in the professional development process.

Challenges facing administrators who want to help teachers grow professionally were expressed in one teacher's advice to principals just beginning the PGO adventure:

I think it would be easy for administrators to see the PGO as an option with little involvement. ... My advice would be not to fear communicating with PGO teachers on an informal basis: "How are you doing? Do I have resources that you can use? How can I help you?" I think communication is vital, but not on a formal basis, such as, "I've observed you, and now let's talk about it." It would also be easy for a principal to say, "This is their Professional Growth Option, and I don't want to

interfere or meddle too much." There is a fine line between doing that, and yet being available and encouraging.

Significantly, most teachers hoped their supervisors would take the PGO "seriously." Contemporary administrators, like teachers, are faced with a withering array of responsibilities. No guarantee exists that supervisors will regard professional development as a high priority. And when fledgling PGO's are regarded as low priorities, they may be doomed to failure.

3. Quality of Teacher-Supervisor Relationships

The teacher-supervisor work relationship represents a third key element of growth. Almost every teacher characterized the ideal relationship as "supportive." Interestingly, though, each teacher defined "supportive" differently; yet another indication that no single prescription for professional development is likely to meet the needs of every teacher.

For some teachers, a supportive relationship entailed generous encouragement. These individuals appreciated supervisors who took an active interest in their goals, but avoided monitoring too closely. Others desired frequent contact with supervisors and more directive guidance and assistance. When stymied, some craved suggestions such as instructional ideas, materials, and ideas from colleagues pursuing similar goals.

One teacher compared the PGO to site-based management as both encouraged teachers and administrators to work as members of the same team:

It's very difficult for me to sort out the Professional Growth Option from site-based management. The two seem so similar and so closely related; basically in both situations you are teaming with administrators. You're not taking orders from them.

Another likened the teacher-administrator relationship under the PGO to that found between teachers and students in class:

> *I would advise administrators to trust their people. I think it's the same thing that teachers learn in the classroom. You have to let go and trust the students. And I'm always amazed with my own students. I know when I do let go and allow them the freedom to create, they always create and do so much more than I ever could have dreamed.*

Trusting teachers to take charge of their PGO might require some administrators to change their beliefs about needing to be "in control."

4. Feedback for the Teacher

Feedback from supervisors, feedback from colleagues, feedback from anyone! Most of our 23 thirsted after a response to their PGO progress. While they did not always specify the type or exact nature of feedback desired, they clearly believed that growth was less likely when undertaken in isolation. Several frankly admitted missing the post-observation feedback they previously received from supervisors under the summative evaluation system. Most teachers, however, indicated that this feedback had not proved very helpful. Either it was too general, too closely associated with checklists of minimum performance standards, or too similar from one year to the next. And many remembered considerable anxiety surrounding the summative evaluation process, even for very capable teachers. On the other hand, teachers found they received PGO feedback more openly because, unlike during the summative evaluation, no negative consequences were associated with the PGO process.

5. The Local Context Factor

The last key to unlocking professional growth concerns local context, specifically the structures and policies governing the PGO and the resources allocated to support it. At first glance, a district's structures and policies might seem incompatible with the emphasis on flexibility men-

tioned earlier. Our teachers, though, regarded certain structures and policies as vital to the success of the PGO:

- Policies preventing PGO documentation from being used against teachers during summative evaluation were praised by several teachers. Without this safeguard, they believed their PGO risk-taking and growth would have been limited.

- Teachers also advised school systems to create regularly scheduled opportunities for PGO participants to meet together, brainstorm possible goals, and share their progress. They recommended periodic conferences between teachers and supervisors, so that work on PGO goals could be discussed and adjusted, if necessary.

- Policies ensuring training in goal-setting for teachers and administrators were advocated.

- Some individuals suggested that teachers should be required to put their PGO work in writing and that exemplary efforts on the PGO be "showcased" or publicly acknowledged in some way.

- Many expressed concern that some of their colleagues were not involved in the PGO because district policies limited the number of participants in a given year.

- Teachers also wished that either the two-year PGO period could be extended (a goal that was accomplished with the state legislature by the ***Washington Education Association*** in early 1994) or that summative evaluation for competent teachers could be eliminated entirely.

- Resources were regarded by almost all our teachers as important. This included time during the school day to work on the PGO, training and conference opportunities, peer observations, and funds for purchasing special materials. As indicated in Chapter 2, most school districts in our study allocated money to support teachers on the PGO. Teachers expressed the hope that tough economic times would not result in the loss of these professional development resources.

A Formative Sample

Reflecting on Tomorrow

How can educators the nation over build upon Washington's efforts to promote professional growth? And will other professionals show the same enthusiasm as our 23 trailblazers?

Will it work for me?

A principal sitting alone in an office, surrounded by paperwork, reads this document and asks, "Can PGO succeed with our teachers, in our district, with our school board?" A superintendent who longs for a tangible recipe for PGO success exclaims: "Just give me a step-by-step process!" An administrator in a PGO-pilot district such as the South Kitsap School District in Port Orchard, Washington, thinks, "How can I make the PGO experience even better?"

Dedicate time, training and resources to teachers on PGO.

We have summarized five keys to formative development for educators in search of growth opportunities. These represent merely a beginning, a starting point. We invite you to unlock with us the door to professional growth success:

- **Wrestle with the participation issue.** Will participation in your professional growth program be voluntary or mandatory? Should your efforts focus on motivated teachers who voluntarily seek growth opportunities? Should you target the professionally stagnant? Will mandating growth jeopardize success?
- **Encourage participants to choose challenging goals,** while at the same time refraining from overly ambitious goal-setting.
- **Recognize differences among educators by accommodating a range of goals** which honor the freedom of individual teachers.
- **Avoid confusing a PGO program with district staff development plans** intended to help teachers grow as a group in a common direction.

- **Encourage supervisor to teacher communication;** avoid viewing the PGO as an option involving minimal supervisory involvement.
- **Trust your people.** This might require some supervisors to change their beliefs about needing to be "in control."
- **Facilitate opportunities for teacher feedback from colleagues,** especially those pursuing like goals.
- **Initiate policies which prevent PGO documentation from being used against teachers.**
- **Dedicate time, training, and resources** to teachers on the PGO.
- **Provide training for administrators.**
- **Acknowledge and showcase PGO successes.**

The Journey Begins

Follow the explorers in Washington State who are charting a course to professional success. And remember that change is a process, not an event.

For more information on initiating the formative evaluation process in your district or state, contact:

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